

A Transparadox Process of Decision Making

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ABSTRACT Decision makers inevitably face a variety of tensions when managing strategic change. Research from organization and strategy perspectives, such as paradox and organizational learning, has offered useful but limited insight into the systematic mindset and thinking processes involved in decision making. We draw on theoretical and philosophical foundations of the transparadox perspective and related theories to build a dynamic process cycle of transparadoxical decision making. Three interrelated dimensions make up our model: (1) Transparadox Information Navigation, which includes embracing oppositional tendencies, syncretic focus, and creative transcendence; (2) Transparadox Contextual Consideration, characterized by prudent precision and recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality; and (3) Transparadox Integration, which comprises design-type integration and exploration-type integration. We then present propositions on the interdependent and reinforcing mechanism among the three dimensions. Our work expands the paradox literature with specific mindset dimensions and constituent elements, connecting paradox research with the cognitive perspective by adding dynamic, cyclical processes to paradox cognition study.

KEYWORDS cognition, Confucianism, mindset, paradox, transparadox

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INTRODUCTION

By its very nature, strategic change contains tensions – contradictions, dialectics, and paradoxes such as exploration versus exploitation, short-term performance versus long-term development, support versus resistance, and disruption versus continuity (Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, & Huy, 2017; Smith & Lewis, 2011). ‘Strategic change’ has been defined to include the combination of changes in both the content of strategy and the environmental or organizational conditions brought about by managerial actions (Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997: 57). As managing tensions in strategic change involves a decision-making process of issue identification, alternative generation, and selection in dealing with various information and cues (Smith, 2014; Weick, 1995), decision makers’ cognitive competencies and skills are at the center of the process (Smith & Tushman, 2005).

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Thus, to effectively cope with the tensions in strategic change, decision makers' cognitive mindset plays critical roles and thus merits further investigation (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016; Smith & Tushman, 2005).

Research from the paradox perspective has gained prominence and offered some general insights into decision makers' cognitive capabilities for managing tensions (Pearce, Wassenaar, Berson, & Tuval-Mashiach, 2019; Schad et al., 2016; Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). The paradox perspective argues that individuals with a 'both/and' outlook, rather than an 'either/or' perspective, engage in paradoxical thinking that fosters effective management of apparent contradictions and opposites (Miron-Spektor, Ingram, Keller, Smith, & Lewis, 2018; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Although this perspective is gaining traction in tension management research (e.g., Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005), there remain three crucial theoretical gaps to fill. First, a paradox mindset indicates 'the extent to which one is accepting of and energized by tensions' (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018: 26; Sleesman, 2019), and a paradoxical frame is defined as the 'mental templates in which managers recognize and accept the simultaneous existence of contradictory forces' (Smith & Tushman, 2005: 526). Given that a mindset is 'a framework or lens that helps to interpret experiences and organize complex reality' (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018: 27), a paradox mindset has to do with the ability to interpret and organize the *complex* reality caused by tensions (Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith & Tushman, 2005). However, extant research on paradox mindset has failed to reveal the inclusive, dynamic cognitive processes of how individuals effectively interpret opposites to see a more complex, whole picture – a perspective that extends beyond the focal opposing sides, and one that could be further illuminated by, for instance, critical cross-cultural nuances from philosophies such as Confucianism (Smith, Erez, Jarvenpaa, Lewis, & Tracey, 2017). We still do not know, for instance, whether individuals are more energized and enlightened when their cognitive processes occur beyond the borders of the focal tensional sides, and if so, what causes such an effect? What does the integrative solution really mean? Second, compared with either/or thinking, the both/and outlook characterizing paradox mindset has been found empirically to be elusive and difficult to sustain over time; for example, when it comes to managing paradoxical tension between similarity and distinctiveness in identities (Cuganesan, 2017). Such findings may imply some degree of theoretical incompleteness of a paradox mindset. Third, individuals with a paradox mindset, or those who engage in paradoxical thinking, may consider the opposing sides as simultaneously contradictory and complementary, emphasizing in particular the inherent incongruity between/among the elements (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Such a mindset, from the contradictory-yet-complementary perspective, extends the concurrent differentiation and integration behavioral strategies (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018; Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011), but has not allowed other possible tension-reducing behavioral strategies such as higher-level transcendence (Bednarek, Paroutis, & Sillince, 2017). Given the

limitations of the existing paradox perspective, there is a need to draw on other, more inclusive perspectives as we seek a better theoretical understanding of how decision makers manage, and make sense of, opposites and tensions.

Transparadox is a framework that encompasses conceptual elements and relationships between and beyond the focal opposites within a novel knowledge system in which oppositional tendencies can be separable, contradictory yet inter-related, and, most importantly, free from the paradox as part of a larger wholeness (Chen, 2002, 2008). Thus the idea of transparadox is closely related to yet clearly distinguished from paradox perspectives (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989; Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Schad et al., 2016), as suggested by the composition of the term, wherein the prefix ‘trans-’ indicates ‘going across or beyond’. Indeed, the transparadox perspective aims to embrace all possibilities from opposing sides in an inclusive and proactive way (Chen, 2002, 2008, 2014), and individuals with transparadox characteristics may be able more effectively to cope with all opposites in a strategic change context. While the transparadox perspective has shed some light and offered certain specific insights on competition and cooperation (Chen, 2008; Chen & Miller, 2015; Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018), concrete theoretical knowledge on the cognitive front is lacking.

The significant gaps in the literature motivated our key research question: *How can we conceptualize transparadox mindset for decision making in a strategic change context?* By connecting the transparadox perspective and its Eastern and Western foundations (Chen, 2002, 2008, 2014) with the effectiveness cycle of decision making (Bird & Osland, 2004), we theorize a dynamic process model to explore our research question. In so doing, our article aims to make three contributions: First, we extend the paradox literature with specific cognitive dimensions and elements by conceptualizing the notion of transparadox mindset. Specifically, we propose three cognitive dimensions, transparadox information navigation, transparadox contextual consideration, and transparadox integration, each of which comprises concrete elements that capture the inclusive and dynamic cognition process related to various tensions. The three dimensions together reveal a more complex, systematic cognitive network for conceptualizing paradox-related cognition. Second, our article uses this mindset to further connect paradox theory and decision making within the strategic change literature, a salient context in which to apply transparadox thinking. In this way, our article expands Smith and Tushman’s (2005) and Smith’s (2014) work, showing how leveraging transparadox thinking characterized by syncretism and transcendence can enable individuals to make paradox-free, effective, creative decisions. Third, our interrelated, dynamic model of transparadox mindset delineates specific processes for making transparadox decisions. In contrast to previous research which views the paradox mindset as an antecedent of paradox coping behaviors (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2018; Slesman, 2019), we add more complexity to the relationship between paradox-related cognition and behaviors by proposing a reinforcing cycle mechanism among transparadox cognitive and behavioral dimensions.

Our initiative reveals both the dynamic interplay between transparadox cognition and action as well as additional behavioral possibilities for coping with various tensions.

THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

In this section, we will provide a critical review of extant theories and introduce the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of our proposed transparadox model. Specifically, we expand the theoretical considerations to answer the question at the center of our investigation: why is decision making for strategic change a promising potential context in which to conceptualize our model from the cognitive perspective (Narayanan, Zane, & Kemmerer, 2011)? To address the limited core assumption of the tension-related paradox perspectives and the theoretical drawbacks of extant paradox cognition research (Farjoun, 2010; Li, 2016; Schad, Lewis, & Smith, 2019), we combine transcendence research in Western paradox management literature with Chinese philosophical foundations of the transparadox perspective (Chen, 2002, 2008, 2016; Lewis & Kelemen, 2002). We apply the effectiveness cycle of leadership sensemaking process to create our model (Bird & Osland, 2004), and further elaborate the reasons why such a cycle can be suitable for our conceptualization by identifying its roots in Weickian sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

The Nature of Tension in the Context of Decision Making

Based on the understanding that strategy can be seen as a pattern in a stream of decisions (Mintzberg, 1978), strategic change process, by its very nature, includes the tension between consistent actions and inconsistent altering, which may imply that such process can be a part of the central paradox – stability versus change (Farjoun, 2010; Smith & Lewis, 2011). More specifically, this central paradox of stability and volatility in a strategic change context may be embodied in many tensions, such as incremental change versus dramatic transformation, short-term versus long-term considerations, advocates versus opponents, and clock-oriented versus process-oriented time structures (Kunisch et al., 2017; Narayanan et al., 2011; Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997). Strategic change often shows considerable overlap with organizational learning (Narayanan et al., 2011). Given that the aim of strategic change is to implement a new organizational alignment with the external environment that is shifting in competition, relationships, and technology, strategic change may also face the tension of exploitation versus exploration for adaptation (Farjoun, 2010; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Further, firms often need to consider the tradeoff and tension between competition and cooperation to foster proper paces of strategic change (Andrevski & Miller, 2020). Therefore, studying these tensions in strategic change from a cognitive perspective can contribute new insights (Kunisch et al., 2017; Narayanan et al., 2011).

Paradox Perspectives, Paradox Cognition, and Organizational Learning

To cope with tensions, the paradox perspective in the extant literature provided insights. We consider paradox perspectives in the organization and management field broadly to include yin-yang, duality,^[1] dialectical thinking, and organizational ambidexterity. We take such an expansive view for two reasons. First, each of these perspectives tends to presumptively treat the opposing sides or tendencies as persistently contradictory parts. Second, resolution of the contradictions can at most be temporary if not impossible (e.g., Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Ashforth & Reingen, 2014; Farjoun, 2010; P. Li, 1998, 2014, 2016; X. Li, 2014; Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Raisch, Hargrave, & Van de Ven, 2018). Thus, it is because contradictory opposites considered from the paradox perspectives are epistemologically interrelated and/or interdependent that such mindsets inherently consider ‘opposing elements’ as fundamentally (or at least partially) separable, segmented objects in a persistent way. And at the cognition level, such paradox perspectives advocate both/and thinking (or either/and thinking (P. Li, 2014: 324)^[2]) rather than either/or thinking, and may treat the relationship between either/or and both/and cognitive styles as meta-paradoxical (Pearce et al., 2019).

The evident presumptions of paradox perspectives, though they enhance some of our theoretical imaginations, have, paradoxically, limited more nuanced insights and even more theoretical possibilities (Cunha & Putnam, 2019; Schad et al., 2019), especially at the cognition level, and this is particularly true for the specific paradox theory (Schad et al., 2019; Smith & Lewis, 2011). The recent organizational paradox literature has made significant progress especially in paradox-related cognition and other micro-level studies (Child, 2020; Smith & Besharov, 2019), and paradox theorists have begun to reflect on the drawbacks of current theory in terms of the ‘premature convergence on theoretical concepts, overconfidence in dominant explanations, and institutionalizing labels that protect dominant logics’ (e.g., Cunha & Putnam, 2019: 95; Schad et al., 2019). However, such efforts are far from exhaustive, as most paradox theorists still proceed from the core assumption of an ‘unresolvably, persistently contradictory-yet-interrelated relationship’ at the meta-theoretical level (Lewis & Smith, 2014). For example, the paradox cognition studies of Keller and Smith (2019) and Calabretta, Gemser, and Wijnberg (2017) tend to treat heuristics (intuition) and rationality as contradictory yet complementary, which aligns with the idea of paradox mindset (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018). However, cognition studies from the paradox perspective are insufficient for revealing the more nuanced relationships between two sides, particularly in the strategic decision making and organizational learning fields. Bingham and Eisenhardt (2011: 1459) found that heuristics is not always the opposite of analysis; ‘heuristics, alternatively, may be the “rational” approach for decisions when there is high heterogeneity in experiences’. That is to say, the two sides of seemingly

contradictory elements can be in unity, which is not paradoxical. Moreover, does irrationality exactly equate to heuristics or intuition? How can multiple different cognition approaches be balanced? Can decision makers transcend intuition (heuristics) versus rationality paradox? These questions have not been clearly answered by the cognition studies from the paradox perspective (Calabretta et al., 2017; Keller & Chen, 2017; Keller & Smith, 2019; Miron-Spektor et al., 2018).

Compared with the social reality perspective, to assume that paradoxes are a social construction can bring more generative outcomes (Sharma & Bansal, 2017), and the social construction perspective makes it possible for framing away paradox (i.e., to treat potential paradoxical conditions as nonparadoxical). Based on sense-making theory (Weick, 1995), Child (2020) theorizes three kinds of frames for rationalizing conditions as nonparadoxical, stressing an important idea: paradox is contingent. By connecting sensemaking theory and framing away paradox issues, Child's (2020) research offers an important theoretical basis for transparadox study. Nonetheless, the author's empirically inductive finding (1) does not reveal the systematic, dynamic, and integrative cognitive processes among different cognitive elements; (2) limits its focus on the two-element paradox structure, and (3) lacks guidance, from a specific theoretical or philosophical perspective, in terms of framing away or transcending paradox. We still don't know, for example, what theoretical relationships may exist among core cognitive elements, and how non-paradoxical social construction processes stimulate more creativity and knowledge in the strategic change context.

Among other recent paradox theory studies, Jarzabkowski, Lê, and Van de Ven (2013), Sheep, Fairhurst, and Khazanchi (2017), and Schad and Bansal (2018), asserting that multiple two-element or dyadic organizational paradoxes can be interwoven or knotted in a system, and that multiple elements within a system can be understood in the form of various dyadic paradoxical relationships, provide a systematic approach for understanding various tensions. Even still, such a method merely emphasizes the tensional and contradictory aspects, ruling out the purely complementary elements and relationships that may also exist in the system (Ford & Ford, 1994). Moreover, the relationships within a system, we believe, are not always dyadic, and paradox is more than a dyad (Comeau-Vallée, Denis, Normandin, & Therrien, 2017). The notions such as trilemma, triality, and trialectics cannot be analyzed only through the summation of embedded dyadic contradictory relationships given by Sheep and colleagues (2017) and Schad and Bansal (2018). For example, 'trialectics does not start with an assumption of conflict and opposition; it does start from an assumption of possibility, relatedness, and attraction' (Ford & Ford, 1994: 781). Thus, current system ideas of paradox may still need more complexity in order to handle the relationships among multiple elements, and the literature needs new insights from other perspectives to fill in such critical gaps (Schad et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2017).

For understanding major tensions such as exploration versus exploitation in strategic decisions, paradox theory inherits the intellectual legacy of organizational

ambidexterity and organizational learning literatures (e.g., Benner & Tushman, 2015; Crossan & Berdrow, 2003; Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999; March, 1991; Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Organizational learning, the process of change in an organization's knowledge (e.g., as through shared mental models) that occurs as it acquires experience (Levine & Argote, 2020: 3), advocates a series of cross-level processes to manage the exploration-exploitation tension in strategic decisions, from individual-level intuiting to organization-level institutionalizing (Crossan & Berdrow, 2003; Crossan et al., 1999). Such an approach can provide a theoretical lens to study paradoxical tensions in individual cognition.

However, while organizational learning can indeed serve as a useful lens through which to examine paradox cognition, we hold the view that extant organizational learning research offers only limited insight into the systematic mindset and thinking processes related to paradoxical tensions, particularly at the individual decision-maker level. First, traditionally the foci of analysis of organizational learning are mainly at the group and organization levels, the former of which is often considered as the micro-foundation of the latter (Argote, 2013; Argote & Levine, 2020), and such a tradition asserts that individual learning is fundamentally different from group learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978: 20). For cognitive and learning processes at the individual level, even though the classic organizational learning theory holds that individual learning can provide mechanisms through which group and organizational learning occur or is activated (Crossan et al., 1999), this learning process is insufficient for groups and organizations (Argote, 2013: 35; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Based on this perspective, managers' and employees' individual-level cognitive processes are constrained and limited because they are often embedded within specific organization-level learning structures (Antonacopoulou, 2006). Along this line, the nuanced, systematic individual cognition and learning processes are neither the main research purpose, nor the central issues for organizational learning.

Second, recent organizational learning research highlights the social construction and active characteristics of the individuals embedded within organizational structure (Furlan, Galeazzo, & Paggiaro, 2019), emphasizing the value contributed by cognitive abilities of (key) individuals. Ganz (2020) reveals the determinant effect of a manager's learning about strategies on organizational innovation and learning. However, although recent organizational learning works emphasize a pathway for incorporating individual-level analysis and key individuals' cognitive aspects, such as a leader's framing of crisis (Lee, Lampel, & Shapira, 2020: 1047), the current literature provides scarce insights on the inclusive, systematic paradox cognition processes of individuals.

Third, for group and team-level learning, Miron-Spektor and Paletz (2020) offer the notion of collective paradoxical frame as the key antecedent for effective team knowledge creation and innovation. However, this theoretical construct is extended from the idea of individual paradox mindset (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) and paradoxical frame (Smith & Tushman, 2005), and faces the three

theoretical gaps we pointed out earlier. In light of these limitations, the organizational learning literature is in need of further insights into individual paradox-related cognitions.

On the other hand, it is well accepted that organizational learning theory has provided critical theoretical foundations for organizational ambidexterity research (e.g., March, 1991; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Recent studies in organizational ambidexterity focus on individual-level behavioral and cognitive abilities to explore and exploit, such as individual ambidexterity, as its micro-foundations (e.g., Mom, Chang, Cholakova, & Jansen, 2019; Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst, & Tushman, 2009; Rogan & Mors, 2014; Tempelaar & Rosenkranz, 2019). It is worth noting that integration is a sufficient condition for individual ambidexterity (Tempelaar & Rosenkranz, 2019), suggesting that individuals' integration predisposition may contain deeper connotations than segmentation or differentiation. Unfortunately, despite current efforts to reveal the cognitive foundations of individual ambidexterity, 'the most prominent approach to cognitively integrate both exploitation and exploration has been what Smith and Tushman (2005) call "paradoxical thinking"' (Tempelaar & Rosenkranz, 2019: 1520), and this line of paradox cognition is also constrained by the theoretical gaps mentioned earlier. As a result, the individual-level ambidexterity research is also insufficient to provide insights on the subtlety of the inclusiveness of tension-focused cognition. Therefore, we assert that even if organizational learning and individual-ambidexterity literature are closely related to tension management issues in strategic decision making, both are insufficient to uncover the nuanced, systematical, and inclusive individual cognitive processes relative to how one perceives, copes with, and learns from various tensions in strategic decision making.

The Transparadox Perspective: Philosophical Roots and Theoretical Underpinnings

To narrow the theoretical gaps, our proposed transparadox perspective extends the paradox theory (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011) by applying ambicultural characteristics that integrate the strengths of both Western and Eastern intellectual foundations (Chen, 2014; Chen & Miller, 2010), as well highlighting inclusion and transcendence (Chen, 2008). Specifically, the transparadox perspective has a tradition of integrating Western paradox management literature with traditional Chinese philosophies. Three theoretical foundations related to the notion of 'transcendence' undergird the transparadox perspective in the literature. The first is transcendence research within the organizational paradox literature. Lewis's (2000) seminal work suggested three ways of managing paradox – avoidance, confrontation, and transcendence – and stressed the importance of reframing thinking. Later, Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017) and Bednarek et al. (2017) clarified that the transcendence response to paradox involves 'altering or reframing thinking to see elements of the paradox as necessary and complementary' (Jarzabkowski &

Lê, 2017: 436). Within paradox theory, through transcendence response, paradoxes cannot be resolved (Bednarek et al., 2017), and the notion of transcendence is a temporary, unstable integration of two contradictory parts. The second line of research centers on the notion of transcendence in a ‘more-than’ approach of responding to various tensions, including paradoxes and contradictions (Putnam et al., 2016). Here, transcendence means ‘using the dynamic interplay between opposites to form a new whole or a novel perspective’ (Putnam et al., 2016: 63), an approach that also can trigger unintended consequences by leading to new tensions over time. The third line focuses on transcendence design at the paradigm level. Poole and Van de Ven (1989) took the example of structuration theory to show how introducing a new term can resolve the paradox between action and structure, while Lewis and Kelemen (2002) emphasized the importance of building a novel understanding (Z) to reconcile the tensions between two opposing paradigms (X and Y). To resolve the tension between empiricism versus constructivism, Ramoglou and Tsang (2016) introduced the realist perspective to offer a paradox-free understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities. Along these lines, transcendence may imply a novel system or abstraction rather than merely an integration of original opposing parts.

Traditional Chinese philosophy may offer a more systemic, nuanced understanding of the notion of ‘transparadox’. Where prior research theorized the Chinese ‘middle way’ perspective as the foundation of the transparadox concept (Chen, 2002, 2008), we elaborate on, and advance, the two interrelated foundations of the transparadox perspective found in Confucianism: *optimum balance* (中道, *ZhongDao*) and *oneness* (精一, *JingYi*).

Optimum balance. In the Chinese classics, the idea of ‘middle’ or *Zhong* (中) embodies the Confucian ideal of seeking an optimal, harmoniously balanced position among various sides without either excessiveness or insufficiency. In this way of thinking, the notion of contradiction tends to be illusive especially in higher realms. For example, in the Confucian classic *Zhongyong* (or *Doctrine of the Mean*), one of the foundational works of Confucianism, we find, ‘All created things are produced and develop themselves each in its order and system without injuring one another; the operations of Nature take their courses without conflict or confusion (萬物並育而不相害, 道並行而不相悖)’ (Ku, 1906: 68). In this thinking, everything can be interpreted from the integrative perspective of ‘self’ and ‘other’, which allows for the conception of superficially contradictory yet interdependent possibilities (Chen, 2016). However, the classic Confucian works also hold that, while true *optimum balance* is the highest human attainment, ‘people are seldom capable of it for long’ (Ku, 1906: 4); highlighting the in-flux, emergent process of ‘becoming’ (Chen, 2014), then, the idea of *optimum balance* advocates dynamism and meaningful timing (時中) (Chen, 2016). In short, it is time- and context-dependent. Based on the *optimum balance* philosophy, the transparadox perspective seeks to pursue a multi-element, paradox-free balancing process through ongoing efforts.

Oneness. The central thesis of oneness is reflected in such traditional Chinese classics as *The Analects* and *The I-Ching*, which define the idea as ‘the movement of the universe firmly converging into the one principle’. The concept is captured in the key Chinese (or Eastern) notion of ‘knowledge equates to action’, or ‘knowledge-practice oneness’ (知行合一) (Chen, 2016, 2018a). Confucius’ life pursuit was to create a syncretic ‘oneness’, a unified, crystalized new totality that encompasses everything, even tensional ideas and issues. Thus, as his words were recorded, ‘My doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity or oneness’ (‘吾道一以貫之’) (Chen, 2016, 2018a).

According to the *oneness* principle, all manner of seeming opposites can exist interdependently, forming a new totality that includes and thereby transcends the original oppositional meanings (Chen, 2016). For example, in Chinese characters, ‘many’ and ‘few’ are integrated into the meaning of ‘how much’, while ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ together mean ‘everywhere’ (Chen, 2002).^[3] In this sense, the integrated totality, which embodies the notion of oneness, can encompass both sides, and in so doing transcend them to denote new, essential meanings (Chen, 2018a, 2018b). Moreover, the integrated ‘oneness’ can be flexibly and inclusively presented. For example, the underlying ‘oneness’, or ultimate principle, for the Chinese concept of ‘ren’, or ‘kindness’, is to ‘put oneself in the other’s shoes’. Thus, when asked by seven different students ‘What is ren?’, Confucius offered seven different answers. In this sense, we may understand the notion of *oneness* as an integrating process that aims to create an inclusive entirety with a flexible, seemingly inconsistent expression.

The Process Cycle for Conceptualizing Transparadox Mindset

The transparadox characteristics of individuals in the strategic change decision-making context may be embodied in the process of how they perceive, analyze, and diagnose a business situation. Bird and Osland’s (2004) effectiveness cycle provides a three-phase process showing what expert global managers and leaders do in terms of decision making and what kinds of individual competencies may be needed in each phase generally (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016). Broadly, in the effectiveness cycle managers will, first, ‘decode and diagnose’ the situation, next identify actions relevant to achieving the goal, then ‘convert cognitive process into execution of the selected response’ (Bird & Osland, 2004: 59–60). The three phases can be used to frame an expert leader or manager’s cognitions and actions in an integrative way by showing the cyclical relationships. The effectiveness cycle has been applied in analyzing key individual processes such as mindful communication, trust creating and building, and ethical decision making in global strategic decision-making contexts (Maznevksi, Mendenhall, & McNett, 2004).

The three phases of the model can be fundamentally understood as incorporating some of the key properties of applied sensemaking (Bird & Osland, 2004: 60), including being retrospective, ongoing, focused on and extracted by cues, and even

being social (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). In this light, viewed as applied sensemaking, the effectiveness cycle offers theoretical foundations for our work in three aspects. First, we hold the view that as an applied sensemaking process, the effectiveness cycle model will also not exclude other latent theoretical properties from the sensemaking perspective, such as being grounded in identity construction (i.e., ‘What the situation means is defined by who I become while dealing with it or what and who I represent’ [Weick, 1995: 24]) and enactive of sensible environment (i.e., sensemakers can often produce part of the environment they face) (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995). Second, based on the seminal book (Weick, 1995), sensemaking theory has also delineated that sense-making process may be driven by beliefs *and* actions, and that the two different processes embody divergent behavioral repertoires. The theoretical observations can shed light on the connotations of behavioral repertoire and flexibility in the effectiveness cycle (Phase 3) (Bird & Osland, 2004: 60). Third, the effectiveness cycle reveals the sensemaking process in organizations, which often unfolds as, and/or triggers, a systematical, emergent, non-linear, and feedback loop process (Weick, 1979, 1995). These characteristics then can potentially connect the complex system theory and other complexity theory with the effectiveness cycle of expert managers and leaders (Rosenhead, Franco, Grint, & Friedland, 2019). In sum, extending from the Weickian and others’ sensemaking perspective (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995), Bird and Osland’s (2004) effectiveness cycle in paradigm level can accurately capture the before-mentioned social, becoming, and reframing characteristics of the transparadox perspective (Chen, 2014; Chen & Miller, 2010). It may also offer further theoretical opportunities for conceptualizing the more nuanced transparadox mindset in strategic change context, in which the various paradoxical tensions such as exploration versus exploitation, competition versus cooperation, and stability and change can be very salient.

TRANSPARADOX MINDSET IN STRATEGIC CHANGE DECISION MAKING

Building on our theoretical and philosophical foundations, we assert that while the optimal transparadox mindset is an ideal state, the greater the degree to which decision makers approach and maintain this mindset, the more effectiveness they will achieve. In this sense, while every decision maker, including the most outstanding ones, can benefit, they may also sometimes deviate from such a mindset. We combined the transparadox perspective and the rationales of effectiveness cycle to propose the core dimensions, specifying elements that constitute the circular effectiveness cycle within each dimension (Figure 1).^[4] For each cognitive element in the proposed dimension, we clarify in Table 1 the specific philosophical and theoretical foundations. We also delineate how each cognitive element can serve as an extension for existing constructs of

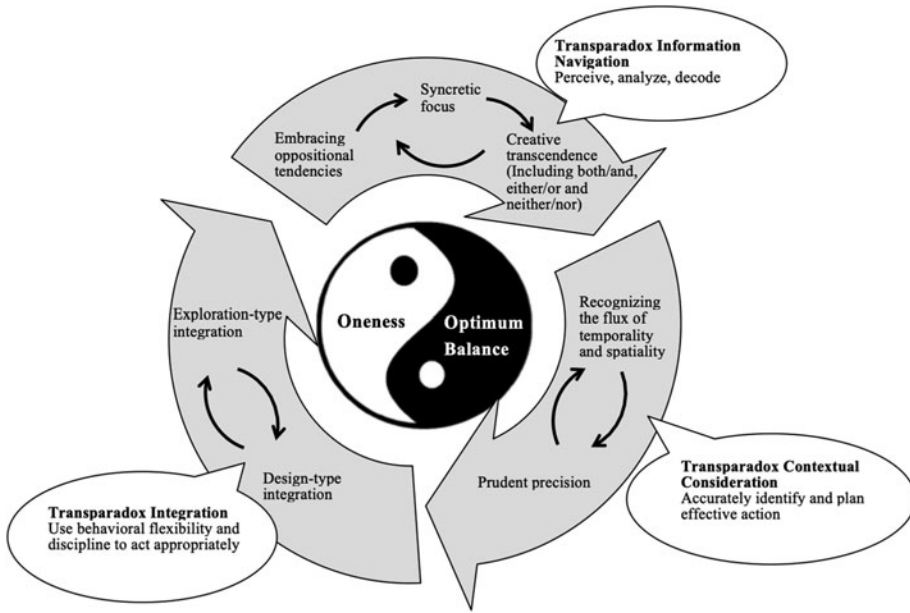


Figure 1. A process model of transparadox mindset in making strategic change decisions

paradox mindset (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) and paradoxical frame (Smith & Besharov, 2019; Smith & Tushman, 2005).

Based on our conceptualization and its foundations, the notion of transparadox mindset we propose in the model is a significant extension and clarification of Chen's (2002, 2008) major arguments in the following three aspects: First, our model makes an initial attempt to elucidate the more nuanced philosophical foundations of the transparadox perspective, adding the key notion and philosophical idea of *oneness* from Confucianism, as extant transparadox research only emphasized the *optimum balance* or *Zhong* philosophy (Chen, 2002, 2008). Based on these tenets of traditional Eastern thinking, we identified syncretic focus as a key component of transparadox information navigation that had not been revealed by previous research. Second, it is worth mentioning that compared with prior transparadox research, our proposed model on transparadox mindset has taken a first step to consider the flux and precision issue when coping with various tensions, which closely relates to the key philosophical notion of *oneness*. Third, as prior transparadox perspective mainly focuses on the structure of understanding various opposites, our conceptual model integrates the transparadox perspective and Weickian sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995) embedded in Bird and Osland's (2004) effectiveness cycle, adding a dynamic perspective on how transparadox can serve as an inclusive and 'becoming' cycling process. Hence, while our model is mainly derived from the current transparadox perspective (Chen, 2002; 2008), as a novel extension of that research it enlarges our understanding of the very nature of transparadox.

Table 1: Theoretical foundations of the elements in the proposed transparadox mindset model

<i>Dimension and Elements</i>	<i>Main Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations</i>	<i>Level of Analysis</i>	<i>Extending Paradox Mindset and Paradoxical Frame Research</i>
<i>Transparadox Information Navigation</i>			
Embracing oppositional tendencies	Philosophical foundation of Optimum Balance (Chen, 2002, 2016); transparadox perspective (Chen, 2008); Weickian sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995)	Individual cognition	Multi-element tensions should be perceived; paradoxical tensions can be proactively enacted and intensified for effective decision making
Syncretic focus	Philosophical foundation of Oneness (Chen, 2016, 2018a)	Individual cognition	Tensions can be cognitively resolved and transcended through higher-level syncretism without inconsistency
Creative transcendence	Philosophical foundation of Oneness and Optimum Balance (Chen, 2016, 2018a); transparadox perspective (Chen, 2008)	Individual cognition	Thinking beyond focal tensions systematically may foster greater creativity
<i>Transparadox Contextual Consideration</i>			
Recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality	Philosophical foundation of Oneness and Optimum Balance (Chen, 2016, 2018a); paradox theory (paradox dynamics) (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020; Smith & Lewis, 2011)	Individual cognition	Tensions are static dynamics in the higher abstraction over time
Prudent precision	Philosophical foundation of Optimum Balance and Oneness (Chen, 2016; 2018a); the Effectiveness Cycle of global leadership (Bird & Osland, 2004)	Individual cognition	An effective, transcendent coping strategy to tensions is narrow in a given context
<i>Transparadox Integration</i>			
Exploration-type integration	Weickian sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995); philosophical foundation of Oneness (Chen, 2016, 2018a); transparadox perspective (Chen, 2008)	Individual cognition and behavior	To find the syncretism within and among tensions is usually a process of becoming
Design-type integration	Weickian sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995); philosophical foundation of Oneness (Chen, 2016, 2018a); transparadox perspective (Chen, 2008)	Individual cognition and behavior	When encountering new tensions, revisit the principle you have crystallized

Core Dimensions for Conceptualizing Transparadox Mindset

Transparadox information navigation. This cognitive dimension represents how individuals perceive, analyze, and decode data (Bird & Osland, 2004), especially potentially contradictory and opposite data, in order to form their decisions. We propose that transparadox information navigation comprises three interrelated elements: embracing oppositional tendencies, syncretic focus, and creative transcendence.

Embracing oppositional tendencies. According to the evident connotations of the transparadox perspective and its theoretical foundations, the first and basic aspect of transparadox information navigation is a tendency to *embrace* the fact of oppositional proclivities at the stage of understanding information and cues (Chen, 2002, 2014; Chen & Miller, 2010). The meaning of ‘embrace’ is twofold: First, an individual conducting transparadox information navigation can cognitively identify, confront, and acknowledge the relationships among multiple tendencies in form of tensions, dilemmas, contradictions, and even multi-element paradoxes. For instance, according to Chen’s (2018a, 2018b) two interrelated papers, management scholars leveraging transparadox methods can fully acknowledge the tensions and opposites among teaching, research, and practice. This idea not only encompasses two-element paradox, it also embraces the multiplicity of paradox. Second, according to the sensemaking property of being enactive of sensible environment, embracing oppositional tendencies, as through transparadox information navigation, also makes it possible for decision makers to create an environment full of opposites that typifies situations they and others experience in daily life (Weick, 1995). That is, decision makers will create oppositional tendencies for others to perceive. Former Intel CEO Andrew S. Grove, who led the firm’s strategic transformation between 1987 and 1998, observed:

[...] a strategic inflection point is a time in the life of a business when its fundamentals are about to change. That change can mean an opportunity to rise to new heights. But it may just as likely signal the beginning of the end [...] You can be the subject of a strategic inflection point but you can also be the cause of one. Intel, where I work, has been both [...]. (Grove, 1996, Preface: 1–2^[5])

It may be inferred from Grove’s words, that strategic-change decision makers are able to enact and exploit the coexistence of opportunity and threat. Ren Zhengfei, founder and CEO of the global Chinese telecommunication firm Huawei, was another expert at leveraging the power of opposite enactment. To prepare for the eventuality of strategic threats and even crisis, Ren in 2004 created what he called a ‘blue army’ of research and development teams to oppose the company’s conventional R&D business; this imaginary ‘enemy’ within Huawei competed with the firm’s actual business units in terms of financial and human resources. In interviews, Ren said that the blue team complained about his so-called ‘ten sins’ (2019, *In His Own Words*,^[6]: 377), reflecting the degree to which the CEO created tensions within the firm to achieve strategic objectives.

Syncretic focus. Based on the philosophical foundation of *oneness*, at the stage of analyzing oppositional information a transparadox decision maker who cognitively embraces opposites can begin to reconcile them, being able to recognize contradictions between/among opposites as superficialities and bring divisions into a unified and cohesive whole (Chen, 2008). Such a mindset may fundamentally resolve contradictions and create a new cognitive system, which may embody a more abstract principle. For example, Zhang Ruimin, founder and CEO of the global home appliances giant Haier, described the company's 'zero inventory' strategic change, reflecting his syncretic focus mindset:

[...] *We proposed an innovative mode that was 'only supplying when there is a need in a zero inventory system'. It seems like a dilemma because we not only needed zero inventories but also needed the high growth. However, as long as we insisted on the orientation of creating customer value, what we did will be all needed, and such a situation will no longer be a dilemma [...].* (May 21, 2009^[7])

Zhang is not alone in this thinking; Huawei's strategy changer Ren Zhengfei, when asked,

Are you basically a good old communist insider, or a capitalist? Do you have to choose between those two?, replied, *'It's not specifically based on any traditional ideology. I don't know what to call it exactly, but I guess it may be called employee capitalism.* (2019, *In His Own Words*,^[8]: 161–162)

The cognitive formation process of syncretic focus tends to entail an awareness of strategically unlearning dysfunctional elements and recombining the functional elements from the focal opposites (Chen & Miller, 2010): that is, to develop syncretic focus, transparadox decision makers need to both cognitively 'absorb' and 'discard' the original elements in opposites.

The syncretic focus mindset can effectively obviate decision makers' cognitive dissonance caused by their embrace of oppositional tendencies in a separated way (Cooper, 2007; Festinger, 1957), as the contradictions or dissonances may be dispelled by a new consistent abstraction. Syncretic focus may also lead to more comprehensive understanding and avoid confusion. The international film actor Bruce Lee, who combined a quintessential American spirit with Chinese traditions and integrated the martial art of *kung fu* with cinema, expressed an idea that indicates syncretic focus:

[...] *The common mistake most people make is to identify this Yin/Yang symbol, Tai-Chi, as dualistic—that is, Yang being the opposite of Yin and vice versa. As long as we separate this 'oneness' into two, we won't achieve realization [...].* (45, Part 1, *The Basic Theory of Yin and Yang*^[9])

Decision makers can adopt a consistent frame to reconcile paradoxical demands such as being adaptive versus persistent, or realistic versus optimistic (Miller & Sardais, 2015). The authenticity generated by a cognitive syncretic focus further

enables them to construct a consistent identity and maintain a positive self-concept (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995), which may imply that transparadox decision makers do not need to compromise passively (Chen, 2016; De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001). Rather, they identify their oneness with the cognitive processes of fusion, which may in turn become an active pursuit of a new totality (Chen, 2002).

Creative transcendence. Syncretic focus inspires creatively transcendent thinking in decision makers, while simultaneously allowing them to decode contradictory information (Bird & Osland, 2004). Such thinking relates to the cognitive process through which decision makers can conceive of possibilities of syncretism of both extremes as well as alternatives beyond current opposites (Chen, 2008). In a study of transcendent thinking, Chen and Miller (2015: 761) suggested that certain strategic perspectives could enhance effective relational competition so that a firm can compete and cooperate simultaneously and ‘lift all boats’.

Moreover, according to the transparadox perspective (Chen, 2002, 2008), the mindset element of creative transcendence is an inclusive consideration that takes into account the paradigms of both/and, either/or, and even neither/nor (Li, 2020). For instance, in transcendent thinking, the aim of firms’ strategic forbearance on competitive attacks is ‘neither to destroy nor to help a rival’ (Andrevski & Miller, 2020: 28); instead, the neither/nor consideration conceives of more expansive types of competitive ideas beyond forbearance. Thus we find, for example, Nelson Mandela, who possessed a mindset that rose above the hatred and division between black and white South Africans during apartheid, writing, in his autobiography^[10]:

[...] *Even in racist South Africa professional solidarity can sometimes transcend color, and there were still attorneys and judges who refused to be the rubber stamps of an immoral regime [...].* (433)

In his words and through both his revolutionary and post-apartheid political actions, a mindset of creative transcendence was reflected in Mandela’s assertion that all South Africans should be treated equally. From Zhang Ruimin we find another anecdotal example. Zhang exhibited creative transcendence through Haier’s explorative versus exploitative innovation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009); when asked, ‘*How does Haier address the relationship between the existent business and the innovative business, that is, the choices between ambidexterity?*’, he replied:

[...] *In the past, we launched new products every spring and autumn, but now things are totally different. If users have needs, we must interact with them at once, consistently iterating, until we create ecological salience where our products are the carriers of the new ecosystem, and we transform from selling products to selling services [...].* (July 30, 2018^[11])

We see that at a cognitive level, Zhang implicitly treated the choices in ambidexterity as a superficiality. Instead, user demand was his syncretic focus, enabling Haier to go beyond ambidexterity and sustain product innovation (Andriopoulos

& Lewis, 2009). Making strategic change decisions can involve balancing ambidexterity in the sustaining innovation dimension (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Christensen, 1997: 11) while going beyond such ambidexterity – or even, as Zhang said, disrupting it. The transcendent oneness for the Haier CEO was the firm's user-demand focus. With this 'one' at the center, Zhang promoted many successful disruptive products, such as washing machines that can rinse vegetables, for Chinese rural customers, and customized washing machines in Pakistan that can wash 15 robes at a time for the traditionally large Pakistani family. In sum, we theorize this cognitive element as creative transcendence.

Based on the interrelated philosophical foundations of *oneness* and *optimum balance* (Chen, 2002, 2008, 2014, 2016), transparadox information navigation unfolds as a cognitive network comprising three interrelated elements as a dynamic wholeness (Liu, Friedman, Barry, Gelfand, & Zhang, 2012), and enabling decision makers to perceive, analyze, and decode strategic change information at Phase 1 of the effectiveness cycle (Bird & Osland, 2004). We propose that by embracing oppositional tendencies, decision makers can cognitively form and/or modify a syncretic focus; and by anchoring such cognitive focus, they can leverage transcendent thinking, which may then enable them to cognitively embrace more possibilities and opposites in given circumstances. It is this process by which, according to the sensemaking theory, decision makers continuously cognitively extract subtle cues within a strategic change context full of opposites and contradictions (Kunisch et al., 2017; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 1995).

Transparadox contextual consideration. This dimension theoretically captures the transparadox competencies of the effectiveness cycle's Phase 2, which allow decision makers to 'accurately identify what managerial action would be most effective in the situation' (Bird & Osland, 2004: 60). Two interrelated elements are at work: recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality, and prudent precision.

Recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality. Another competency of transparadox decision makers, deriving from the philosophical foundations of the transparadox perspective and the paradox literature, is the ability to fully acknowledge and consider the relentless flux of time and space, or the principle of constant flux (Chen, 2008, 2016; Raisch & Krakowski, 2020), in order to manage tension between stability and change (Farjoun, 2010). The transparadox perspective and the ideas of *oneness* and *optimum balance* further undergird this four-fold principle. First, transparadox decision makers are characterized by their continuous consideration of the ongoing dynamism of opposites in the strategic change context. Scholars have found that even though there are some basic oppositional tendencies in business and management, such as stability-change and supply-demand, the opposites are inherently dynamic and varying in different contexts (Farjoun, 2010; Jing & Van de Ven, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). And from an ontological standpoint, the transcendence is considered to be a process rather than an entity or state (Bednarek et al., 2017; Chen, 2014), an understanding

that sheds light on the notion of continuous consideration. Second, as ‘becoming’ transparadoxical requires being proactive (Chen, 2014), decision makers with transparadox competencies take an active orientation coping with temporal flux of opposites. Lee Kun-Hee, the former chairman and CEO of Samsung who successfully integrated Eastern and Western systems within the firm, revealed his proactive ambition to globalize his company’s image by promoting Samsung to the world with eye-catching phrases like, ‘*Change everything except your wife and children*’ (Song & Lee, 2014: Vii). Concerning stability versus change, Haier’s Zhang Ruimin once noted, ‘[...] *Change the bad but do not get changed by the bad. The best way is to reinvent ourselves [...]*’ (Zhang Ruimin, June 16, 2014^[12]). The third aspect of temporal and spatial flux recognition, in accord with the foundations of the meaningful timing of *optimum balance* (Chen, 2016), is embodied in decision makers’ seizing of opportunities with the right timing or momentum, and coping with opposites such as stability-change and competition-cooperation (Chen & Miller, 2012). Jing and Van de Ven’s (2014) change research examined the traditional *yin-yang* balance perspective to show the critical role of leveraging momentum. The fourth aspect is the ability to adhere to the constant principle, or *oneness*, in the midst of in-flux opposites. Again, we may look to Haier’s iconic strategist Zhang Ruimin for demonstration of this characteristic. Considered both radical^[13] and powerful for his downsizing decision (Fischer, Lago, & Liu, 2013) but also mild and encouraging as a Confucian business practitioner, Zhang was described by a close subordinate in this way:

[...] Many key top managers in Haier are veterans who have followed Zhang Ruimin for more than twenty years. Besides the fact that they did well at Haier, the most important reason was Zhang Ruimin’s being decent. In more than twenty years, he hasn’t changed. Never indulge himself in prosperity, and never compromise his image in adversity, he is considered a successful leader in all of our eyes [...]. (Haier Group former president Mianmian Yang, Nov 13, 2006^[14])

Transparadoxical individuals can make strategic change decisions in a principled way, and are consistent and true to this approach (Chen, 2002, 2016). Based on our conceptualization, transparadox decision makers adjust to temporal and spatial flux, and in a higher abstraction they are also able to follow their constant principles amidst in-flux opposites.

Prudent precision. Based on the philosophical foundations of the transparadox perspective and the effectiveness cycle’s emphasis on the accuracy of identifying successful actions (Bird & Osland, 2004: 60), a transparadox individual may consider strategic change decisions in a way that demonstrates ‘prudent precision’: that is, decision makers tend to be sensible in their preparation in order to reach a position of optimal, or precise, balance (Chen, 2002, 2016). This competency incorporates two sub-aspects. First, when there is a need to reconcile opposites, transparadox decision makers may, cognitively, ‘walk a thin line’ between/ among opposites, in so doing demonstrating prudent precision. Zhang exhibited

this competence in his consideration of how to undertake strategic transformation at Haier:

[...] *Actually, what Haier truly needs to face is the tolerance for trial and error. We have tried and failed for several years because we need to be deliberate and weigh our campaign cautiously. If we tolerate free exploration too much in the transformation process, we may lose our control later. But on the opposite, if we do not offer enough tolerance for trial and error, the transformation cannot continuously move on. The big challenge is how to accurately handle the degree issue [...].* (Zhang Ruimin, Nov. 15, 2015^[15])

Thus, a transparadox decision maker may pay considerable attention to finding the precise balanced position between/among opposites such as empowerment and control. Second, prudent precision also means a transparadox decision maker may cognitively reject compromise or concession over time when it comes to holding an established strategic position or principle fusing various oppositional tendencies. Based on the philosophical foundation of *optimum balance* (Chen, 2002), the transparadox perspective stresses the centrality of a dynamic self-other balancing process and a higher level of sustainable integration (Chen, 2016). To compromise the integration of oppositional tendencies is neither highly concerning for 'self' nor highly concerning for 'other' in terms of managing conflicts (De Dreu et al., 2001: 646), which then can damage the true integration. Along this line, the notion of prudent precision may serve as a key aspect distinguishing a transparadox mindset from a compromise or middle-ground mental model.

It is worth mentioning that, in theory, prudent precision is seemingly inconsistent with the plausibility property of sensemaking (Weick, 1995: 17), which denies the pursuit of accuracy. In fact, however, practicing transparadox is a process of continuous exploration and inclusion (Chen, 2018a, 2018b), and transparadox decision makers can hardly deal with all the opposites at one time (Chen, 2014). The competency of prudent precision aims at identifying plausible solutions with the pursuit of excellence in the context of decoded opposites. Overall, we propose that the transparadox competency of prudent precision enables managers and leaders to make effective decisions.

Our conceptualization of transparadox contextual consideration also implies the interrelationship between prudent precision and recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality. In order to identify effective managerial actions, decision makers may first cognitively put the opposites in a proper spatial and temporal context, and then do so in an accurate way (Chen, 2014), that is, not being inadequate, excessive, or compromising for each side. Conversely, to maintain the state of incremental accuracy, recognizing the flux will then be necessary for sequences of planned actions (Maitlis & Christiansen, 2014). The reciprocity between the two elements follows exactly the rules based on the philosophical foundations of transparadox perspective – the constant *oneness* and *optimum balance* (Chen, 2018a; 2018b; Chen, 2016).

Transparadox integration. In the third dimension of our framework, we theorize two interrelated elements of transparadox integration patterns which reveal both the oneness-oriented characteristics of transparadox perspective (Chen, 2002, 2014, 2018a, 2018b) and the belief- and action-driven characteristics of applied sense-making (Bird & Osland, 2004; Weick, 1995). The two elements, design-type and exploration-type integration, enable transparadox decision makers to marshal both behavioral flexibility and discipline to act according to specific contexts. We elaborate each element below.

Design-type integration. The first aspect of transparadox integration may be defined as a behavioral pattern, including a set of interrelated actions, continuously integrating opposites with a *pre-existing* constant principle or deliberate aspirations. In his seminal work, Weick (1995) asserted that the process of sense-making could be belief-driven, where cognition preceded actions (133). For transparadox decision makers, such a behavioral pattern works as the constructive enlargement of the small cue of their pre-existing syncretic focus (Maitlis & Christiansen, 2014). That is, within the context of the oneness principle, transparadox decision makers are aware of their ‘ones’ and then conduct their behavior in such a way as to flesh out the ones (Weick, 1995). According to the transparadox perspective (Chen, 2008), tradeoff and both/and actions alike can be effective and managerially meaningful to maintain all-inclusive interdependence and oneness. Huawei’s Ren described the specialization-diversification tradeoff in the strategic change context of the global telecommunication firm:

[...] *We have been working on a single point for three decades. At first, we had several dozen and several hundred employees focusing on this point, then we had tens of thousands, and now we have over a hundred thousand. We have been focusing all of our energy on this same single point, which inevitably results in breakthroughs [...].* (In His Own Words,^[16] Jan-May, 2019: 441)

By staying within this ‘oneness’ domain of information transmission, Ren propagated the specialization strategy for years to lift his organization. In contrast, in Haier’s early years (1984–1991), besides tradeoffs CEO Zhang promoted his oneness, the brand-name corporate strategy. In 1989, faced with a fierce price war in the domestic home appliance market, Zhang chose to raise the price of Haier refrigerators by 12% – a transcendently integrative action that both sent an iconic market signal and enhanced short-term performance. Following the theoretical perspective of transparadox (Chen, 2002), as exemplified by the strategists of leading global firms, we propose that the ability to conduct design-type integration is a crucial competency enabled by transparadox thinking.

Exploration-type integration. Based on similar theoretical foundations, transparadox decision makers can also take a course of action that makes it possible to explore, extract, and modify the constant syncretic principle(s) among opposites, identified as the behavioral process of ‘becoming’ (Chen, 2014). The

exploration-type integration behavior pattern also is anchored theoretically in Weick's (1995) action-driven process of sensemaking (155). Based on sensemaking theory, action-driven sensemaking can offer rich unnoticed details and is a source of order and value as well (Weick, 1995). In contrast with design-type integration, decision makers' exploration-type integration may precede the next round of their transparadox information navigation; that is, their process of becoming transparadoxical can also start with being open to vast information to extract small cues (Weick, 1995). For example, since 1984 Zhang Ruimin had exhibited explorative integration that helped him clarify the principle of 'prioritizing people's value',^[17] reconciling strategic competing focuses: inside employee potential versus outside user experience. He once prioritized outside user demand and encountered fierce resistance from his employees (Zhang, 2007), but later his strategic change decision on promoting the *person-task oneness or, in essence, customer-employee oneness (Rendanheyi)* model strived for simultaneous integration of the inside and outside opposites. Similar to design-type integration, we propose that the exploration-type integration pattern encompasses both/and actions and tradeoff actions, and the transparadox perspective implies that exploration-type integration can facilitate all behavioral possibilities (Chen, 2008). It is noted that our conceptualization of transparadox integration for decision makers is explicitly based on Phase 3 in the effectiveness cycle (Bird & Osland, 2004). Precisely because cognition and action are interrelated (Weick, 1995), the two types of behaviors can be conducted in a combined and even interdependent way, and such a behavioral structure exactly embodies the behavioral flexibility in Bird and Osland's (2004: 60) model. It is also worth mentioning that as strategic change context is inherently uncertain, there tends to be no absolute design-type integration and the boundary between the two types could be vague.

PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING THE REINFORCING MECHANISM AMONG TRANSPARADOX DIMENSIONS

Combining transparadox perspective with the effectiveness cycle and its sense-making theoretical background, effective transparadox strategic change process benefits from the virtuous reinforcing cycle of cognitions and actions (Bird & Osland, 2004; Chen, 2008; Marshak, 1993; Weick, 2009). Specifically, we propose that the reinforcing cycle mechanism among the transparadox dimensions is largely grounded in Weickian properties of sensemaking (1995: 17) as well as its adjacent theories and perspectives including, among others, its emphasis on interdependence and complexity theory (Maitlis & Christiansen, 2014; Weick, 2009), its legacy of cognitive dissonance (Weick, 1995), and its foundation in identity and self-consistency research (Maitlis & Christiansen, 2014; Weick, 1995). As mentioned before, it is also evident that the co-action of the interrelated elements within each dimension would turn out to be more effective than the separated ones (Liu et al., 2012;

Weick, 1995). Thus, below we offer propositions in the effectiveness cycle's structure (Bird & Osland, 2004).

Transparadox Information Navigation and Transparadox Contextual Consideration

On the one hand, as previously discussed, decision makers conducting transparadox information navigation – embracing oppositional tendencies, syncretic focus, and creative transcendence – tend to treat all opposing things as mutually inclusive and interdependent (Chen, 2002, 2008, 2014), and such a mindset may embody and foster the holism concept (Chen, 2002) and holistic thinking (Chen, 2014). According to the interdependence characteristic of holistic, complex systems, the deviation-amplifying loops can exist as nonlinear circles, and the ‘very small differences in initial conditions can lead very quickly to very large differences in the future state of a system’ (Weick, 2009: 264). Further, thoughts from complexity perspectives such as holism and chaos theory reveal that small beginning actions can result in huge and often surprising results in an unpredictable or volatile way (Maitlis & Christiansen, 2014; Obolensky, 2014; Rosenhead et al., 2019). Along this line, decision makers with a strong transparadox information navigation element are more likely to be motivated to avoid such unwanted and unnecessarily unpredictable consequences when dealing with various interdependent opposites. In other words, they may more prefer making decisions in a very precise way with as little inadequateness and excessiveness as possible.

On the other hand, according to the system perspective, it is widely accepted that the interplay between the opposing sides in contradiction are dynamic (Putnam et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011), thus transparadox decision makers who have the mindset of embracing oppositional tendencies may also beware of the flux in temporal dimension. Similarly, as tensions themselves are characterized as multiplicity in spatial scale (Raisch & Krakowski, 2020), individuals with the mindset of embracing oppositional tendencies and creative transcendence may also be more likely to recognize the spatial context when making specific decisions. As mentioned before, decision makers who embrace oppositional tendencies may cognitively enact opposites (Weick, 1995), and such activeness would be more likely to foster the competency of being proactive to seize opportunity. Finally, based on sensemaking and the cognitive dissonance perspective, individuals with the mindset of syncretic focus may have stronger motivation to interpret inconsistency as superficiality and maintain a positive self-concept. This would in turn enhance their motivations and competencies to make specific consistent decisions and remain constant in flux (Festinger, 1957; Weick, 1995). Thus, we propose:

Proposition 1: Decision makers who embrace oppositional tendencies, syncretic focus, and creative transcendence through strong transparadox information navigation will be more likely to effect transparadox contextual consideration, which includes prudent precision and recognition of the flux of temporality and spatiality.

Transparadox Contextual Consideration and Transparadox Integration

Combining the transparadox and sensemaking perspectives, individuals who recognize the flux of temporality and spatiality and who are prudent in making decisions will tend to take nothing for granted, refine more meaningful possibilities, and proactively accept the unexpected (Chen, 2014; Weick, 1995). Moreover, such context-based consideration not only enables decision makers to take new elements and factors into consideration according to the existent focus but also makes it possible, and rewarding, to challenge long-held beliefs (Chen, 2014: 133), even if they do not necessarily have clear reasons at hand to question their assumptions. Along this line, decision makers with more awareness of temporal and spatial flux would be more likely to exhibit behaviors that explore, modify, and refine their integrative principles and beliefs (i.e., exploration-type integration).

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, managers who make specific decisions with prudent precision may explicitly reject compromise or concession. Such context-based consideration, in this sense, would enable the decision maker to insist on the pre-existing invariable principles. More importantly, based on the complexity (fractal) theory, intricate, holistic systems (as, in nature, the shapes of snowflakes) may be formed by a few very simple and constant rules (Obolensky, 2014). For those who make strategic change decisions in a prudent precision way, the constant principle they hold can also enable them to achieve effective opposite integration in a complex, multilevel, and cross-setting way (Chen, 2002). For example, as mentioned, by continuously focusing on the ‘one’ domain of information transmission, Huawei’s Ren Zhengfei was able to balance series of strategic opposites, including diversification versus specialization, current versus future businesses, and advocates versus opponents, for change sustained over a period of years.

Proposition 2: A higher degree of transparadox contextual consideration style that includes both the characteristics of recognizing prudent decisions and the flux of temporality and spatiality is more likely to lead to decision makers’ transparadox integration, which comprises both design-type integration and exploration-type integration.

Transparadox Integration and Transparadox Information Navigation

According to the effectiveness cycle, transparadox information navigation helps decision makers to perceive and analyze, enabling especially a propensity for ‘matching characteristics of the current situation to those experienced in the past, in the process scanning for relevant cues’ (Bird & Osland, 2004: 59). The process of decoding situations shows its explicit theoretical roots in sensemaking, which is characterized as a process of retrospection (Weick, 1995). From the sensemaking perspective, post-decision outcomes are applied to the reconstruction of the pre-decisional histories; thus, action shapes cognition (Weick, 1995: 12).

As cognition can be formed by precedent action, then, theoretically it follows that decision makers' transparadox information navigation may be shaped and enhanced from their precedent transparadox integration. On the one hand, extensive exploration-type integration behaviors demonstrated by decision makers may provide more diversified stories and experience related to dealing with opposites, enabling them to build cognitive databases for future inference (Weick, 1995). As the notion of 'becoming' suggests (Chen, 2014), the openness characteristic of exploration-type integration can enable decision makers to continuously accept the unexpected both in cognitive and behavioral aspects, and thus extend their behavioral repertoire. According to behavioral complexity literature, leaders' and senior managers' extensive behavioral repertoire may further help them achieve the behavioral complexity that connotes action and cognition, particularly in dealing with contradictions and paradoxes (Denison, Hooijberg, Quinn, 1995). Based on the intensive cognitive complexity, decision makers will accept and confront various opposites, tensions, and even paradoxes (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and thus enhance their mindset of embracing oppositional tendencies. Given the exploratory nature of such behavioral patterns, the way in which decision makers transparadoxically conduct their exploration-type integration behaviors can be challenging (Chen, 2014); in this circumstance, they are reflective and more likely to 'explore the role played by themselves, others, as well as external factors in the outcomes attained' (Heslin & Keating, 2017: 374). Along this line, exploration-type integration would enhance their mindset for seeking more possibilities beyond opposites (i.e., creative transcendence).

On the other hand, as discussed before, decision makers' intensive design-type behaviors may imply that they have been behaviorally persistent in adhering to their established principles or oneness (Chen, 2018a, 2018b). When such behaviors are also perceived as effective, according to the self-concept research (Erez & Earley, 1993; Weick, 1995), their self-enhancement and self-consistency motives and needs will be activated, which in turn will make them pursue the controllable and regulate the vague by enhancing the cognition of syncretic focus (Heslin & Keating, 2017). Thus, our third proposition:

Proposition 3: A higher degree of perceived intensity and effectiveness of decision makers' transparadox integration comprising design-type and exploration-type integration behaviors will lead them to conduct stronger transparadox information navigation.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contributions

Our article contributes to the literature in the following respects. First, it serves as a meaningful extension of paradox literature with specific cognitive dimensions, namely, transparadox information navigation (embracing oppositional tendencies, syncretic focus and creative transcendence), transparadox contextual consideration

(recognizing the flux of temporality and spatiality, and prudent precision), and trans-paradox integration (design-type and exploration-type integration). Our theoretical findings of the dimensions and their elements contribute to the paradox cognition research by proposing a more nuanced, inclusive, and systemic cognitive network (Liu et al., 2012), which tends to be characterized as an ‘all/beyond’ thinking. Compared with extant paradox cognition-related concepts such as paradoxical thinking (Ingram, Lewis, Barton, & Gartner, 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011), paradoxical frame (e.g., Keller, Loewenstein, & Yan, 2017; Smith & Tushman, 2005), and paradox mindset (e.g., Miron-Spektor et al., 2018), the dimensions of transparadox mindset demonstrate how tensions and opposites can be accepted, sense-given, and better leveraged in a more systematic way. The interrelationships among the three transparadox information navigation elements further show the dynamism and holism characteristics of this kind of individual mental model, expanding our understanding of paradox cognition and how such thinking actually ‘energizes’ individuals (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) and makes possible deeper learning. Specifically, compared with the similar paradox cognition concept, our theoretical findings and related empirical evidence show how individuals with a transparadox mindset may make the most of oppositional tendencies by proactively enacting them rather than simply coping with emerging tensions as opportunities; how individuals’ cognitive syncretic oneness may help them generate deeper insights into a higher-level, relatively stable, and meaningful fusion between/among opposites; and how they can pay attention to more possibilities beyond the focal opposites according to their syncretic oneness. Our findings on the dimension of transparadox contextual consideration also contribute by revealing, through the dimension’s two elements, how individuals consider the in-flux imperatives of opposites, and how they may consider the utility of paradox transcendence according to different situations. Further, our reflections on transparadox mindset advance Miron-Spektor et al. (2018) and Keller and colleagues’ (2017) understanding of decision makers’ paradox-related cognition; that is, in business reality, expert Chinese decision makers may think *transparadoxically* rather than paradoxically. Conclusively, our conceptualization of transparadox mindset may explicitly advance our understanding of paradox cognition.

Second, our study used mindset (cognition) to further connect paradox and decision making for the strategic change literature, a salient context within which to apply transparadox thinking and expand related research such as Smith’s (2014) and Smith & Tushman’s (2005) work. As focusing on tensions is a pathway for further strategic change research (Kunisch et al., 2017), a more nuanced, specific understanding of the paradox-centric dynamics of strategic-change decision making would benefit the two fields. Although it is notable that scholars have begun to connect the fields of paradox research and strategic-change research by exploring cognition aspects (Calabretta et al., 2016; Kunisch et al., 2017; Smith, 2014; Smith & Tushman, 2005) our findings on transparadox mindset further advance such studies by delineating how to leverage transcendent thinking to resolve the strategic tensions and paradoxes existing in the demands and processes of strategic-

change decision making. Specifically, our conceptualization has extended our knowledge on how various strategic paradoxical or tensional demands can be cognitively resolved through a three-dimensional transparadox process. In addition, our related empirical observations may help reveal how leveraging cognitive elements of syncretic focus and creative transcendence, such as Zhang Ruimin's 'prioritizing people's value', Ren Zhengfei's 'striver' orientation, and Nelson Mandela's humane proposition, can further enable an integrating process that melds the stable and dynamic (Farjoun, 2010) characteristics of strategic-change decision making process, as well as intuition and rationality (Bingham & Eisenhardt, 2011; Calabretta et al., 2016). Our research may suggest that how typical strategic change is as a context for utilizing transparadox thinking.

Third, we offer an interrelated and dynamic model of transparadox mindset that delineates specific processes of making transparadox decisions. By exploring the interrelationships among the dimensions of transparadox information navigation, transparadox contextual consideration, and transparadox integration, our study further identified the reinforcing cycle mechanism in the transparadox decision process. We found how the transparadox individual competencies enable each other in the strategic-change decision-making process. Specifically, we elaborated the transparadox behavioral modes enabled by transparadox mindset, which emphasized the integration front by embracing both/and (Smith & Lewis, 2011), either/or prioritization (Cuganesan, 2017), and neither/nor strategic options, and even the action of melding oppositional tendencies simultaneously in a same act (Chen, 2008; Chen & Miller, 2015). Compared with prior paradox management strategies research, our findings on the dynamic model elaborate how transparadox mindset may take more behavioral possibilities into consideration rather than only differentiating and integrating (Bednarek et al., 2017; Smith, 2014), and how such behavioral flexibility may further enhance transparadox mindset. Our conceptualization of the dynamic model may advance the literature on paradox management strategies and the dynamic process of paradox cognition (Bednarek et al., 2017; Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017).

Transparadox Perspective at the Individual Cognition Level

Our article also extends the transparadox perspective (Chen, 2002, 2008), by conceptualizing the constituent elements and dimensions of the transparadox mindset based on the Eastern and Western theoretical foundations identified here. We highlight the philosophical roots of the transparadox perspective, the *power of one*, or *oneness*, and the closely related notions of Chinese *middle way* (*Zhong*) or *optimum balance*. Where prior transparadox research has mainly delineated how *middle way* philosophy enables transcending paradox, our study on the cognitive elements of individual-level mindset stresses the importance of syncretic focus. It reveals how syncretic focus would enable creative transcendence, which in turn, in a reinforcing cycle, would provide possibilities to shape a more refined syncretic focus. In this

sense, the connection and interplay between *oneness* and *optimum balance* are mutually enforcing, and the two philosophical notions together shape the cognitive network of transparadox mindset (Figure 1).

Our theoretical findings and philosophical reflections provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of transparadox. We make an attempt to deal specifically with the flux and precision issues in the transparadoxical process (Chen, 2002, 2008). Based on the idea of *oneness* identified in our study, we stress the importance on the constant side of flux, revealing the consistency in the transparadox perspective. By studying transparadox mindset at the individual level, we also determine that precision is vital to achieve paradox transcendence, a finding new to the transparadox research. Additionally, our conceptualization of the notion of individual transparadox mindset may further help connect the current transparadox perspective with theories of sensemaking and complexity (Morel & Ramanujam, 1999; Weick, 1995), which is also noted in the extant transparadox research. Our study on individual-level mindset both broadens and sharpens the transparadox perspective while exploring the nuances of its philosophical foundations. It may imply that the notion of transparadox mindset, which is the opposite of parochialism mindset (Feng, Liu, & Jiang, 2019), embodies the essence of ambicultural thinking (Chen & Miller, 2010) and can provide nuanced cognitive foundations for paradoxical and ambicultural leadership studies (Filatotchev, Wei, Sarala, Dick, & Prescott, 2020; Pearce et al., 2019).

The Potential Vicious Cycle of the Transparadoxical Decision-Making Model

Our transparadoxical decision-making model theorizes a reinforcing cycle among dimensions stimulating continuous learning and the adaptation process (Marshak, 1993), graphically depicted in Figure 1 as an upward spiral in terms of understanding and coping with oppositional tendencies. Such a dynamic cycle may enhance decision-making creativity in strategic change contexts by deepening decision makers' knowledge of oppositional tendencies. The continuous generative outcomes of learning and creativity, according to paradox dynamics, embody a virtuous cycle for organizational paradox process (Lewis, 2000; Pradies, Tunarosa, Lewis, & Courtois, 2020; Smith & Lewis, 2011). However, we assert that although our proposed theoretical model can be understood as a form of virtuous cycle, the sources of such a cycle are not only those both/and, strategic responses based on the paradox theory (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2017; Smith & Lewis, 2011), but also include some of the so-called defensive responses to paradox (Cuganesan, 2017). As one of the most prominent defensive responses in paradox management, the either/or, polarized reaction between the two extremes in our model can also effectively push oppositional tendencies into a virtuous cycle (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). This is because an either/or cognitive frame may be helpful when there is a need to defend or clarify the boundary of syncretic focus in a focal system. Moreover, our

process model stresses the cognitive element of creative transcendence to foster the virtuous cycle, accommodating more tendencies/elements in and beyond a dyadic way, and leveraging more non-linearity effect to lift the whole system anchored by a given/explorative syncretic focus. Overall, our proposed transparadox decision-making model differs from Smith and Lewis's (2011) dynamic equilibrium model in at least three aspects: First, our model can accommodate both a dynamic equilibrium cycle and a deviation-amplifying cycle (Weick, 1979), and the tensions in a focal organization can be either reduced or intensified over time according to the 'oneness' of a system. Second, compared with the coping strategies of Smith and Lewis (2011), our model does not impose a 'both/and' or 'differentiation and integration' strategy on paradox management; instead, our model emphasizes the importance of syncretic focus and prudent precision when defining an effective/strategic response to paradox. Third, our model further clarifies the continuity of constructing/managing different tensions over time by conceptualizing the notion of syncretic focus, which is not revealed by the extant dynamic equilibrium model.

The potentially *vicious* cycle, however, caused by exacerbating the 'dark sides' of opposites and contradictions (Lewis, 2000), is not represented in our model. We emphasize the centrality of the cognitive elements of syncretic focus and prudent precision to avoid a potential vicious cycle. On one hand, if a decision maker does not cultivate a sense of syncretic focus, then the cognitive elements of creative transcendence and embracing oppositional tendencies become fragmented, unstable, and even impossible. Based on complexity theory, the principles of syncretic focus can serve as core connective and generative mechanisms for the holism of dynamic systems (Chen, 2018a; Morel & Ramanujam, 1999), and may also be embodied as *emergence* characteristics of collective elements explaining 'how system-level order spontaneously arises from the action and repeated interaction of lower level system components without intervention by a central controller' (Chiles, Meyer, & Hench, 2004: 501). Thus, when decision makers overlook syncretic focus, they are likely to face more intertwined challenges, be overwhelmed by paradoxical information, and, finally, be paralyzed by information overload. On the other hand, we believe that the cognitive element of prudent precision can be another critical aspect in preventing a vicious cycle. Similar to Butterfly Effect (Thiéart & Forgues, 1995), non-linear change through a decision-making process can tolerate little inaccuracy in a highly complex environment, and the lack of prudent precision for decision makers can block syncretic focus, accelerating the process by which decision makers may slip into vicious cycle.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has some limitations that future research might address. The first line of empirical inquiry should go beyond our examples based on publicly available anecdotes and start with both qualitative and quantitative designs. A qualitative study could include in-depth interviews, triangulated with longitudinal archival

data centered around a few decision makers who potentially embody the transparadox mindset. These multiple sources of data could be used to construct comparative cases to discern the intricacies and potential causal links among the dimensions and elements of our proposed transparadox cycle of decision making. Qualitative case studies could inform further empirical efforts in the design, validation, and testing of a scale of transparadox decision making from multiple organizations, a large number of participants, and data from decision makers and their constituents in various positions of these organizations. Further longitudinal and multilevel designs are likely needed to investigate the long-term impact of transparadox decisions on business and relationships with a diverse set of stakeholders.

Besides conducting qualitative studies on transparadox cycle of decision making, researchers may at the same time develop a scale to measure the concept of transparadox mindset as a next step. Following Liu, Chua, and Stahl's (2010) study design, researchers need to (1) generate a pool of items derived from our three theoretical dimensions and empirically investigate the factor structure among them; (2) establish discriminant validity among the three dimensions; (3) test the consequences of transparadox mindset in strategic change; and then (4) replicate the third step with a different sample and scenarios. As Schwab (1980) suggested, establishing a measure's construct validity (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991) is neither a one-time task nor a single approach procedure. For the next step's scale development, researchers might choose our three dimensions, namely, transparadox information navigation, transparadox contextual consideration, and transparadox integration, as the key theoretical foundations, and further develop validated items for each dimension as well as a pool of items (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 2004). Then, several tests and retests from a diverse set of participants would be needed to establish various validity and reliability indices (DeVellis, 1991; Hinkin, 1998). As transparadox mindset is a dynamic cognitive network, to further scrutinize the structure and dynamism of this construct, future empirical studies may need to qualitatively leverage process data and methods in multiple temporal processes (Langley, 1999).

On the other hand, transparadox mindset is a dynamic cognitive network as a holistic concept. Therefore, we would suggest that it could be insufficient to only conduct the self-report item generations and/or categorizations for each dimension via the selected informants' thinking processes. In order to further capture the holistic and cognitive network characteristics of transparadox mindset, we believe there is a need to use qualitative techniques of concept mapping, because such an approach is open ended and thus allows for potential new ideas on transparadox from the informants, while also making it possible for researchers to scrutinize connections among the cognitive elements in the transparadox mindset in given scenarios (Huff, 1990; Liu et al., 2012). Specifically, researchers can offer to informants a series of tensional scenarios such as in the contexts of strategic change or competition and cooperation, and then draw a concept map reflecting their observed actions and capturing their thinking processes.

Our dynamic transparadox mindset model may also need further elaborations on its boundary conditions. As transparadox mindset applies to complex situations with uncertainty (Chen, 2002; Weick, 1995), it may not be as useful in monocultural or authoritarian situations where decisions are clear or monolithic. For instance, previous research in strategic decision-making literature implies that tensions and conflicts may lead to senior managers' use of political behaviors in an authoritarian environment, which would reduce the performance of a firm (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). As transparadox mindset requires individuals to hold open attitudes and firm principles, an authoritarian situation would impede the strategic decision makers from doing so, and prevent decision makers from being able to make clear and uniform decisions. In that circumstance, decision makers' transparadox mindset may be an unnecessary cognitive template that complexifies the decision-making process. From the cross-cultural perspective, when leaders and managers make decisions in a less multi-cultural or a monocultural situation, the inadequateness of the tensional cues and information might not activate decision makers' transparadox thinking. Our article has not touched on those boundary condition issues for the conception of transparadox mindset, an area that merits further research.

Our study has also not explored the contextual factors of the proposed dynamic model of transparadox mindset. In the strategic change context, it can be quite true that contextual and environmental dynamism may speed up or slow down the linkage between and among the three dimensions (Grag, Walters, & Priem, 2003). According to extant research on strategic tensions, a fast-changing environment would cause the latent tensions to more easily become salient (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and in such situations more opposite-related information and cues would emerge to activate decision makers' transparadox thinking. Conversely, when decision makers are faced with a relatively stable environment, there is less need for them cognitively to transcend paradoxes. As the dynamism of context and environment will be likely to speed up or slow down in the dynamic transparadox process, our article did not focus on such a topic. Future research could explore the moderators for the spiral process of the proposed transparadox mindset model.

It will also be useful to propose such a construct along other logic lines. For instance, while our model is mainly based on Bird and Osland's (2004) one-directional model, the interactions among our three proposed dimensions may be nuanced and complicated, and further research based on the philosophical foundations of *oneness* and *optimum balance* can explore the potential two-directional interactions, or even new linkages, among them. Also, as the transparadox perspective might not be a panacea, what are the potential drawbacks for transparadox mindset, such as in the physical or emotional aspects? Could thinking transparadoxically for leaders and managers be psychologically stressful or take a toll in other ways? What are the transparadox mindset and behavioral mechanisms for leadership and/or organizational effectiveness in non-opposite situations? As we have mentioned, the boundary conditions merit future research.

To conclude, the 2020 global pandemic and the worldwide response to the Black Lives Matter movement have exacerbated the need for decision makers – at the individual, organizational, and national levels – to be both agile and sophisticated to cope with the everchanging reality. Transparadox information navigation, for example, provides a path for examining and decoding torrents of information (and misinformation) by embracing opposite data and syncretizing discordance into actionable decisions. Transparadox contextual consideration facilitates thinking processes that recognize such big-picture factors as history and geography with prudent focus. And transparadox integration suggests flexibility and balance in behavioral outcomes. Most importantly, the dynamic interdependence of these elements encourages continuous reflection, learning, and adaptation. We are hopeful that a transparadox mindset offers an alternative guide to survive and thrive in current and future environments of uncertainty and flux.

NOTES

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- [1] Among paradox-related perspectives, the duality view is often considered the one that most emphasizes the interdependence characteristic of oppositional tendencies (Farjoun, 2010; Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Schad et al., 2016). However, even in the duality view, ‘the oppositional tendencies cannot simply be wished away’ (Ashforth & Reingen, 2014: 476), and the opposites in duality still contain contradictions (Farjoun, 2010).
- [2] According to the research conducted by P. Li (2014, 2016), yin-yang balancing is rooted in the ‘either/and’ logic (emphasizing *both* trade/conflict and synergy/complementarity) (相生相克), which is different from the paradox perspective. Here we stress the common characteristic of the two perspectives, that they both tend to reject pure ‘either/or’ thinking (Li, 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011).
- [3] Interestingly, English also has similar types of words, terms that may mean two opposite things. For instance, the word ‘custom’ can mean both ‘convention; collective habits’ and ‘made specially for an individual’; ‘bound’ can connote both ‘to leap; to jump’ and ‘secured from moving’; and ‘strike’ may describe both ‘an act of hitting’ and ‘a miss’.
- [4] Even though the yin/yang symbol has been used to illustrate a paradoxical relationship (or an ‘either/and’ relationship) by paradox scholars, we use it here based on a Confucian perspective, delineating the two mutually enabling, ideal notions of *Oneness* and *Optimal Balance* that convey opposing tendencies and cyclical changes (Legge, 1963; Marshak, 1993), rather than showing a paradox. The two notions may express the oppositional tendencies of ‘integrating as one’ and ‘diversifying as (more than) two’.
- [5] *Only the Paranoid Survive: How to Exploit the Crisis Points That Challenge Every Company*, by Andrew S. Grove.
- [6] Sources: <https://www.huawei.com/en/facts/voices-of-huawei/on-the-record-huawei-executives-speak-to-the-public> [Accessed 5/2/2020] Huawei’s official website for Ren’s ‘ten sins’: http://xinsheng.huawei.com/cn/index.php?app=forum&mod=Detail&act=index&id=3840309&search_result=2 [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [7] Source: http://paper.dzwww.com/jjdb/data/20090304/html/6/content_1.html [Accessed 3/4/2021]

- [8] Source: <https://www.huawei.com/en/facts/voices-of-huawei/on-the-record-huawei-executives-speak-to-the-public> [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [9] *Chinese Gung Fu: The Philosophical Art of Self-Defense, Aed., 2008*
- [10] *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, by Nelson Mandela
- [11] Source: http://www.sohu.com/a/244162964_100014404 [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [12] Source: https://tech.sina.com.cn/zl/post/detail/c/2014-06-16/pid_8454904.htm [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [13] Source: <https://corporate-rebels.com/interview-zhang-ruiyin/> [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [14] Source: In *The First Implementer: The Managerial Philosophy of Haier Group President Mianmian Yang, 2007*, by Shubo Cheng
- [15] Source: *IT Time Weekly*, 2015.11.15
- [16] Source: <https://www.huawei.com/en/facts/voices-of-huawei/on-the-record-huawei-executives-speak-to-the-public> [Accessed 5/2/2020]
- [17] Source: <https://www.haier.com/eg/about-haier/haier-group/> [Accessed 5/2/2020]

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