



Theorizing as Mode of Engagement in and through Extreme Contexts Research

Organization Theory
Volume 4: 1–26
© The Author(s) 2023
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/26317877231217310
journals.sagepub.com/home/ott



April L. Wright¹ , Derin Kent¹, Markus Hällgren²
and Linda Rouleau³

Abstract

We explore how management and organization scholars theorize when undertaking research on extreme contexts, which are organizational settings where potential adverse events arise from risks, emergencies and disruptions. We propose that different ‘modes of engagement’ arise as researchers connect different aspects of the self to the extreme context; namely, personal self, professional self, moral self and vulnerable self. Each self-context connection plays out in different modes of engagement in the conduct of empirical research and enables different theorizing practices. We present these self-context connections as four ideal-typical modes of engagement. *Adventuresome inquiry* connects a personal self to the extreme context and theorizes by phenomenon-driven problematization. *Instrumental scholarship* expresses a professional self in the extreme context and theorizes by theory elaboration. *Ideological improvement* galvanizes a moral self in the extreme context and theorizes by change-driven abstraction. *Reflexive labor* exposes a vulnerable self and theorizes by dialectical interrogation. Our comprehensive framework of theorizing as mode of engagement contributes to extreme context research by elucidating how theorizing in and through such contexts is accomplished by researchers with multiple selves and by offering some guidance on how the four modes can be used dynamically to ensure generative theorizing. We also contribute to the broader literature on theorizing in management and organization studies by highlighting the need to consider the interplay between the researcher and the academic contributions they produce and by proposing a reflexive and dynamic framework of theorizing as modes of engagement.

¹Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

²Umeå School of Business, Economics and Statistics, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden

³HEC Montréal, Montréal, QC, Canada

Corresponding author:

April L. Wright, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Gibbet Hill Rd, Coventry, CV4 7AL, UK.

Email: April.Wright@wbs.ac.uk



Keywords

academic careers, extreme contexts, field work, modes of engagement, practices, reflexivity, theorizing, typologies

Management and organization research associated with extreme contexts is surging (Hällgren et al., 2018). Recent extreme context studies have run the gamut from the unconventional (e.g. online paedophile hunters, de Rond et al., 2022) to the conventional (e.g. doctors and nurses in a hospital emergency department, Wright et al., 2017, 2021) to the myriad ways organizational and individual actors are grappling with the disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic, wars, terrorism, bushfires and earthquakes (e.g. Dwyer et al., 2021; Farny et al., 2019; Kent, 2019; Rouleau et al., 2021). As these examples illustrate, ‘extremeness’ plays out in organizational settings where operations are constantly exposed to risks of harmful events, in organizations that are designed to respond to actual emergencies, and when organizations are disrupted by unexpected and sometimes horrific events (Hällgren et al., 2018). More precisely, contexts distinguished as extreme are those

where one or more extreme events are occurring or are likely to occur that may exceed the organization’s capacity to prevent and result in an extensive and intolerable magnitude of physical, psychological, or material consequences to—or in close physical or psychosocial proximity to—organization members. (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 898)

Despite researchers swarming to study organizations and organizing in extreme contexts and the rise of special issues of journals (Hällgren et al., 2022; Kornberger et al., 2021), specific themes and dedicated tracks at international conferences (PROS 2022, EGOS) and the publication of an award-winning systematic literature review (Hällgren et al., 2018), many researchers often struggle to theorize from their empirical inquiry into ‘the extreme’. We argue that this struggle arises from the properties

inherent in extreme contexts. First, the events, activities and interactions that happen in extreme contexts are multi-layered, high-stakes, fast-paced and unpredictable (Golden et al., 2018; Hällgren & Rouleau, 2019). Extreme contexts can often spring into periods of highly intense and swift action amid periods of more mundane activities at a slower pace (Geiger et al., 2021; Golden et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2022). When beginning to theorize such contexts, a researcher may be so overwhelmed by their context’s complexity and dynamism that they over-simplify extremeness by relating it only to concepts and theories they are already familiar with. Doubt may then be corralled rather than engaged with generatively (Locke et al., 2008) and imagination is shut down rather than disciplined creatively (Weick, 1989), such that in turn the scope for theoretical novelty and deep insight narrows.

Second, the dangers, fast pace and unusual (for business school academics) experiences that arise in extreme contexts may appear fascinating and can feel exciting (de Rond, 2012; Hällgren & Rouleau, 2019; Sharma et al., 2023). As a consequence, researchers who are trying to theorize can become so enthralled with the context’s extremeness that they produce a descriptive empirical story and are unable to abstract a meaningful theoretical account. Excessive description muddles conceptual clarity (Suddaby, 2010) and inhibits the focus on abstraction needed to produce theory that is deemed to be interesting (Whetten, 1989) and of general importance (Tihanyi, 2020).

Third, organizational settings involving risks, emergencies and disruptions expose the researcher to physical and psychological harm (Jané et al., 2022) alongside the organization’s members, as the basic definition of extreme contexts asserts. The potential harm to the self, coupled with the potential and/or actual harm for research participants, sometimes inflicted

by horrific and traumatic events, arouses the researcher's emotions and vulnerabilities (Claus et al., 2019; Jané et al., 2022; Whiteman, 2010). Thus, a dark and dangerous undercurrent of harm brings the researcher's personhood and sense of human frailty into relief in ways that other empirical contexts do not (Claus et al., 2019; Wright & Wright, 2019). Yet the special challenges that harm and any associated emotions pose for empirical inquiry and theorizing in extreme contexts are rarely acknowledged.

Taken together, these distinctive characteristics of extreme contexts research (hereafter EC research) create a struggle to theorize which the existing literature on theorizing fails to address. In management and organization studies, a growing body of work provides strategies and typologies on how to theorize (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2020). These strategies span from disciplined imagination (Weick, 1989) to problematization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), reasoning (Cornelissen & Durand, 2014), novelty and convention (Patriotta, 2017), and reflexive theorizing (Cutcher et al., 2020) to name a few. However, for the most part, these strategies and typologies remain centred on the process of writing papers and theorizing according to generic categories of social science (Cunliffe, 2022) and promote a view of theorizing as craft (Rivard, 2021). They tend not to take into account the researchers' lived experience and personhood (Shepherd et al., 2021; Wiklund, 2016; Wright & Wright, 2019), and thus provide little guidance for researchers struggling to theorize because of the highly personal ways that extreme contexts can overwhelm, enthrall and harm. We take up this challenge in this paper by asking: *How can management and organization scholars theorize in and through the study of extreme contexts?*

In addressing this question, we adopt an overarching view of theorizing not as a craft but as a more personal mode of engagement that connects the researcher with an extreme phenomenon in context (Cornelissen et al., 2021). More specifically, we see theorizing as involving different modes that are linked to, and enabled by, the researcher's personal engagement

with the contexts and topics they choose to study. Based on the literature and our own experiences researching extreme contexts, we propose that different 'modes of engagement' arise as researchers connect different aspects of the self to the extreme context; namely, personal self, professional self, moral self and vulnerable self. Each self-context connection plays out in different modes of engagement in the conduct of empirical research and enables different theorizing practices, giving rise to different theoretical 'products' or contributions. We propose four ideal-typical modes of engagement. Connecting a personal self to the extreme context, the mode of *adventuresome inquiry* theorizes by phenomenon-driven problematizations. Expressing a professional self in the extreme context, the mode of *instrumental scholarship* theorizes by theory elaboration. Galvanizing a moral self in the extreme context, the mode of *ideological improvement* theorizes by change-driven abstraction. Finally, exposing a vulnerable self in the extreme context, the mode of *reflexive labor* theorizes through dialectical interrogation. This characterization of modes of engagement thus captures how a researcher's salient self configures the way in which s/he engages with the empirical material and develops theory. In addition, because researchers have potentially multiple selves that they can bring to a project, or that may be triggered when doing the research, we see these connections as fluid and dynamic. Depending on when and how different selves are experienced in relation to the extreme context, a researcher can move between different modes of engagement within a project and across a career and may also combine multiple modes by working in teams.

In the remainder of the paper, we elaborate our framework of self-context connections shaping different modes of engagement. We explain how what researchers attend to and how they theorize systematically differs based on these modes of engagement. We then further discuss how these modes of engagement can be dynamically integrated through plural trajectories within projects and over a career. In doing so, we make two contributions. First, we

contribute to the extreme contexts literature by clarifying and articulating how theory salient to organizational settings involving risks, emergencies and disruptions is generated through different modes of engagement that enable a variety of theorizing practices. Second, we advance the broader literature on theorizing in management and organization studies by accounting more seriously for who is the researcher (or the researcher's selves) and what are their motivations for undertaking empirical research, proposing a dynamic and reflexive framework of theorizing as rooted in modes of engagement with empirical contexts.

What are Extreme Contexts?

Scholarship in management and organization studies has begun to cohere around an understanding of 'extreme contexts' as those organizational contexts where adverse events may or do occur that pose significant physical, psychological and/or material danger to organizational members and to others (e.g. Hällgren et al., 2018; Hannah et al., 2009; Maynard et al., 2018; Rouleau et al., 2021). A key marker in the emergence of a more coherent domain of research inquiry was Hällgren et al. s' (2018) systematic literature review, which developed an organizing framework (REDS) that distinguishes between: *Risky* contexts (where organizations face potential extreme events related to the organization's core activities; e.g. drilling); *Emergency* contexts (actual extreme events related to core activities; e.g. emergency departments); and *Disruptive* contexts (actual extreme events unrelated to core activities; e.g. pandemic). *Surprising* contexts (potential events not related to core activities; e.g. a zombie apocalypse) were added later (Buchanan & Hällgren, 2019). The REDS framework pulls together previously fragmented streams of scholarly endeavour in areas including crisis management and disasters (Bundy et al., 2017; Gregg et al., 2022; Madsen, 2009; Rudolph & Repenning, 2002), risk (Gephart, 1993; Hardy et al., 2020), high reliability organizing and

resilience (Bigley & Roberts, 2001; Weick et al., 1999; Williams et al., 2017), and extreme action teams (Edmondson, 2003; Golden et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2006).

The REDS framework has played a crucial role in clarifying the concept of an extreme context and in setting a research agenda. Most importantly, this work sought to highlight how such research has helped advance management and organization studies by promoting strong and robust theoretical contributions despite the high level of fragmentation of this research field. Yet even as more and more researchers are becoming attracted to investigating extreme contexts, and particularly those characterized by danger, how theorizing happens in these contexts remains largely opaque. As we noted earlier, exposure to risks, emergencies and disruptions pose special challenges for theorizing due to the unique ways that extremeness can overwhelm, enthrall and harm the researcher in ways that other contexts do not. To offer some guidance for management and organization scholars seeking to theorize in and through extreme contexts, we contend that the starting point is to take the researcher's personhood seriously by viewing theorizing as linked to, and enabled by, a researcher's personal mode of engagement with the extreme context.

Theorizing Extreme Contexts Through Modes of Engagement

We propose that theorizing in extreme context research occurs through modes of engagement, in which the researcher personally connects with particular aspects of the extremeness of the context during empirical investigation and this connection enables different modes of theorizing. Conceptualizing the researcher as variously able to bring their personal, professional, moral and vulnerable selves into their EC research, we use the term 'mode of engagement' to capture three key elements that distinguish different ideal-typical modes through which the self-context connection plays out and which enable particular theorizing practices.

Table 1. Theorizing in and through extreme contexts as mode of engagement.

Researchers' mode of engagement				
	Adventuresome inquiry	Instrumental scholarship	Ideological improvement	Reflexive labor
Self-EC connection	Personal self	Professional self	Moral self	Vulnerable self
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Phenomenon ▪ Fascination with extremeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theory ▪ Transparency of gaps/puzzles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice and policy ▪ Social justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vulnerable-extreme hyphen space ▪ Existential struggle
Subject positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canons of ethnography ▪ Rhetorical appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social science norms ▪ Middle-range theorizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsible research values ▪ Research-practice nexus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflexivity and reflexive practice ▪ Deep sensemaking of events
Empirical attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Phenomenon-driven attention to extremeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theory-guided attention to extremeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problem-focused attention to extremeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-reflexive attention to extremeness
Theorizing practices	Phenomenon-driven problematization	Theory elaboration	Change-driven abstraction	Dialectical interrogation

The first element is *motivations*, with researchers having different motivations for studying organizational settings involving intense risks, emergencies and/or disruptions according to whether the personal self, professional self, moral self or vulnerable self is involved. The second element is *subject positions*, with researchers locating themselves in particular circulating discourses guided by whichever self is connected to the extreme context. The third element is *empirical attention* to extremeness, with the self shaping the nature and scope of the researcher's attention to the extremeness of the context during the conduct of empirical investigations. The interplay of motivational, positional and attentional elements enables particular theorizing practices. We propose that four ideal-typical modes of engagement can be construed based on different combinations of these elements: adventuresome inquiry, instrumental scholarship, ideological improvement, and reflexive labor. We summarize each of these modes of engagement in Table 1. We first present each mode in turn as an ideal type, before discussing the implications for how researchers can pursue different modes

and plural trajectories by moving between multiple selves in EC research.

Adventuresome inquiry

We conceptualize adventuresome inquiry as a mode of engagement that is underpinned by a close relationship between a context's extremeness and the researcher's personal self. Extremeness is personally tied to how the researcher expresses their identity (Ashforth et al., 2008) such that 'who I am' is energized and animated by 'what I do' to engage with the experiences of people and organizations in extreme contexts. We describe this mode of engagement as adventuresome inquiry because it involves a researcher boldly living out their personal version of what Ghoshal (2005, p. 81) described as Darwin's 'model of research as the work of a detective . . . driven by the passions of an adventurer'.

Motivation. Anchored by a personal self, the researcher is motivated to explore a phenomenon which they find intrinsically stimulating because of its extremeness. The phenomenon

grips the researcher's imagination and motivates a personal quest to understand it by immersing oneself, either directly or vicariously, in the focal extreme context. For example, reading a book about a wildland firefighting tragedy can spark a 'preoccupation' with trying to understand these decision interactions (Weick, 2007, p. 14). In other examples, a researcher can be intrigued by police officers on city streets (Van Maanen, 2010), inspired by surgeons at war (de Rond & Lok, 2016), or feel a compulsion to physically test the self and experience organizing in extreme pressure situations by rowing the Amazon River (de Rond et al., 2019), climbing the Himalayas (Jané et al., 2022), or joining a polar expedition (Rouleau et al., 2013). Adventuresome inquiry 'passion projects' might also be pursued by scholars who, for example, practice 'extreme' sporting and recreational pursuits such as mixed martial arts (Helms & Patterson, 2014) or who are 'extreme' hobby enthusiasts such as readers of military history (Lohrke et al., 2012).

Subject positioning. The researcher positions a personal self in relation to scholarly discourse about being 'where the [extreme] action is' (Goffman, 1969). While this positioning often involves drawing on the canons of organizational ethnography in the social sciences (e.g. Rouleau et al., 2014; Van Maanen, 2009), adventuresome inquiry can also be pursued by passive methods such as an 'armchair ethnographer' (Weick, 2007, p. 15) or via representations in media, art, or fiction (Buchanan & Hällgren, 2019). As such, the researcher positions their work discursively as stories of life-and-death consequences and of harm in relation to dominant scripts and models already authorized within the management scholarly community (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011), such as 'tackling grand societal challenges' (George et al., 2016) and understanding how and when rational models of organizing fail (Beamish, 2018).

Empirical attention. The interplay between the researcher's intrinsic curiosity about an extreme

phenomenon and the expression of a personal self directs researcher attention towards comprehensively understanding extremeness when they collect and analyse empirical material. This attentional mode is illustrated in Gephart's (1993) account of his study of a pipeline disaster, in which he sat in on a public inquiry 'in its entirety . . . [asking] what happened, why did it happen, and what are the implications?' (Gephart, 1993, p. 1477). Gephart's devoted attention to understanding how extremeness is constituted in the pipeline disaster (i.e. 'what's happening here?' with regard to risk, danger and human and material consequences) is anchored in the interweaving of extremeness with a personal self. In his account, Gephart explains how his belief that the accident was fascinating and worthy of his empirical attention was connected to, and expressed, his identity as an EC researcher: 'I was a researcher who wanted to understand disasters from an organizational analysis perspective' (p. 1477). As this example shows, adventuresome inquiry as a mode of engagement focuses research attention on capturing the constitutive properties that render an organizational context as extreme, such as risks, disruption, emergencies, high stakes, danger, intense physical and psychological pressures on organizational members, and intolerable human and material consequences (Hällgren et al., 2018).

Theorizing practices. The motivational, positional and attentional elements of adventuresome inquiry anchored in a personal self, as described above, enable theorizing practices that, drawing on Gkeredakis and Constantinides (2019), we conceptualize as *phenomenon-driven problematization*. Theorizing starts from the researcher's own experience of the extreme phenomenon, bringing an 'expansionist curiosity' as they strive to understand the full nature and nuance of its extremeness (Hannah, 2020, p. 46). At the same time, because the researcher is closely attentive to the extremeness of the context, we suggest that the risky, emergency and disruptive characteristics that are intrinsic to extremeness hit the researcher physically,

emotionally and bodily as they gather empirical materials. Thus, the expansion in the researcher's curiosity is accompanied by rich stimulus for provoking the researcher's imagination (Weick, 1989). With both researcher curiosity and stimulus for imagination expanded, the researcher can abductively think about what the phenomenon might signify theoretically speaking and problematize existing theoretical understandings in imaginative and expansive ways. Examples include Weick's (1993) original theory of the collapse of sensemaking emerging from adventuresome inquiry into wildland firefighting and de Rond's 'new way of seeing' the sentient, sedimented and situated role of the body in sensemaking after rowing the Amazon River (de Rond et al., 2019).

Instrumental scholarship

In contrast to adventuresome inquiry, we conceptualize instrumental scholarship as a mode of engagement that keeps extremeness largely separate from a personal self. Instead, extremeness provides a context – among multiple possible empirical contexts – in which the researcher can live out a professional self in the specific academic community into which they have been socialized (Cilesiz & Greckhamer, 2022). Extremeness is not part of 'who I am' as a researcher, but instead a place where the scholarly work of a professional self can be productively and generatively performed. We describe this mode of engagement as instrumental scholarship because it embraces Pettigrew's (1990, p. 275) advice to study extreme contexts and events based on a 'straightforwardly pragmatic' rationale of providing a means to an end of better theory.

Motivation. The researcher is motivated by a traditional desire to address a gap or puzzle in the management and organization studies literature (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013) coupled with an a priori expectation that the extremeness of the context will render that gap or puzzle 'transparently observable' (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 275). This perceived association between empirical

extremeness and theoretical transparency makes the extreme context appealing as 'an opportune setting' (Valentine, 2018, p. 2084) for accomplishing the theoretical interests and goals of a professional self. For example, a researcher interested in puzzles surrounding theories of team coordination (Valentine, 2018; Williams et al., 2022), or professions (Wright et al., 2017) might judge the fast pace, high consequences of error, and fluid staffing in emergency departments to be an especially fruitful context (Williams et al., 2022). A researcher whose professional self is motivated by theoretical puzzles related to routines (Geiger et al., 2021) and trust (Colquitt et al., 2011) might study firefighting, because the context's situational unpredictability, danger and temporal uncertainty mean routines and trust are 'especially vivid in this occupation' (Pratt et al., 2019, p. 399; see also Weick, 1974).

Subject positioning. When engaging with EC research, the researcher positions and legitimates a professional self in the institutionalized discourse of the 'scholarship of discovery' in social science research (Boyer, 1990). In business school research, the scholarship of discovery equates to a quest for understanding of phenomena that in academic terms is considered rigorous and relevant (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007) and produces theories of the middle range appropriate for social sciences (Merton, 1957; Pinder & Moore, 1980). By selecting the focal extreme phenomena for its distinctive and theoretically salient characteristics, the researcher seeks to ensure that resultant theory can be written at a relatively concrete and specific level, meeting standards for effective middle-range theorizing (Bourgeois, 1979; Merton, 1957). In doing so, the researcher positions the work of their professional self to comply with normative expectations about conducting research to conventional standards of theory elaboration.

Empirical attention. The researcher expresses a professional self by directing only peripheral and narrow attention to extremeness in the

empirical materials. That is, the researcher is attentive to extremeness only in so far as it relates to the theory of interest. The attentional mode we have in mind here is illustrated in Ganesh's (2014) account of participating in a street protest while studying digital communication media and protests. Ganesh (2014) describes how 'my broad theoretical commitments to organizational communication studies' (p. 450) shaped what he paid attention to when violence broke out between protestors and police. Viewing the violence through his professional self as a communication scholar, Ganesh focused on evaluating, collecting and preserving empirical materials from the protest context that might relate to digital communication theory. The realization of the physical threat into actual violence is not pursued empirically (e.g. the barriers, enablers and processual dynamics of its emergence, escalation and consequences) because the nature and processes of extremeness are peripheral to the researcher's core theoretical interest and professional self.

Other examples involving different methods of data collection underscore this attentional mode. Researchers might seek out large quantitative datasets (e.g. about natural disasters) or assemble historical case studies (e.g. about the Sicilian mafia) by confining their attention to only those disruptive, risky or emergency aspects of the context that are relevant to their chosen theory lens (e.g. corporate social responsibility in response to natural disasters, Ballesteros et al., 2017; the mafia's management of strategic ambiguity, Cappellaro et al., 2021). Thus, what distinguishes empirical attention in instrumental scholarship as a mode of engagement is not the method or form of empirical materials collected, but how the researcher attends to extremeness from the perspective of a given covering theory.

Theorizing practices. The motivational, positional and attentional elements of instrumental scholarship anchored in a professional self, as described above, enable theorizing practices that we conceptualize conventionally as *theory elaboration* where the focus is on prior

theoretical representations that are probed and extended in relation to the extreme context. Consistent with conventional approaches to theorizing, the researcher attends to an extreme context with a prior theory in hand and then leverages the distinctive characteristics of their focal extreme context to fill in and extend a given theoretical canon (Dencker et al., 2023; Pettigrew, 1990).

We see the researcher using theory elaboration as a theorizing practice in two ways. First, the researcher can extend theoretical representations by clarifying and nuancing specific dynamics and boundary conditions of an existing concept or relationship. For example, theorizing by exploring the global arms industry (Vergne, 2012) and the sex work occupation (Toubiana & Ruebottom, 2022) – both extreme contexts that combine physical danger and moral harm – elaborate theory by clarifying boundary conditions associated with how and when concepts associated with organizational and occupational stigma are salient. In other examples, comparing extreme contexts which vary in unpredictability, degree of harm, and natural or human sources – such as mega events and natural disasters (Tilcsik & Marquis, 2013) or the Spanish influenza and spring frost (Rao & Greve, 2018) – extends the boundaries of institutional theories related to field formation and change and institutional legacies. Second, the researcher can elaborate theory to better understand the distinctions between extreme and mundane settings (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010; Johns, 2017; Schmutz et al., 2023). Wright and co-authors, for example, probed the dynamics and boundaries of evidence-based management in traditional organizations by theorizing its underlying mechanisms in an emergency context (Wright et al., 2016). In their study of responses to the disruptions caused by Hurricane Katrina, Feldman et al. (2022) extended the boundaries of organizational routines by exploring continuity as both a 'thing' and a 'process', arguing that this shed light on how 'naïve organizations' (Hannah et al., 2009) may respond to other non-related disruptions.

Ideological improvement

Our third proposed mode of engagement for EC research is ideological improvement which connects to, and expresses, a researcher's moral self (Aquino & Reed, 2002). The researcher engages with the intolerable human and material consequences of events in an extreme context as a form of prosocial behaviour to express a moral social identity in their role as a scholar, and as a citizen, who is concerned about acting in service of the societal good and human welfare. Capturing the powerful moral force and ideological commitment that galvanizes the moral self to engage with an extreme context in this mode, Chowdhury (2017b, pp. 1114–1115), who studied the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in his native country of Bangladesh, writes, 'A researcher has a pressing moral responsibility to undertake work that will help his/her people and society. I did not want to shirk that moral responsibility.' While all modes of engagement share 'a broad agenda of making the world a better place and ours a better profession' through the study of organizations and organizing in extreme contexts (Hansen & Quinn Trank, 2016, p. 353), we distinguish ideological improvement as a distinct mode of engagement that perceives a more or less deeply felt moral obligation to directly translate this agenda into outcomes for practice, policy and communities.

Motivation. The researcher, as mentioned, is morally motivated to help solve problems that emerge from, or are worsened by, the extremeness of the context. We suggest that this motivation – which combines a researcher's heightened awareness of the human, material and natural-world consequences of extremeness with a strong sense of academic moral responsibility – can play out in two ways. A researcher might be motivated by the practical problems of preparing for, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from risky, emergency and disruptive events. For example, an industrial disaster that exposes dangerous organizational operations – such as a fire on an oil rig, plane crash, or

space-shuttle failure (Maier, 1998, 2002) – can motivate a researcher to try to make these workplaces instrumentally safer. In other instances, after a terrorist attack or natural disaster, a researcher might strive to help governments and communities to develop their communication and coordination capacities to prepare and respond (Dwyer, 2022; Hu et al., 2014; McGuire & Schneck, 2010).

The second way a researcher can be motivated is more consistent with a critical management perspective given that the risks, emergencies and disruptions of extremeness can expose social injustices and power imbalances (Clegg, 2013). When this occurs, a researcher can become incited to direct their efforts at regulatory change and institutional activism to safeguard marginalized individuals and groups and promote their interests (Bapuji et al., 2020). We suggest that extreme disruptive events that have motivated researchers in this way include the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2017a), the Beirut port explosion (Creed et al., 2022) and, for some researchers, the Covid-19 pandemic (Peredo et al., 2022).

Subject positioning. In contrast to instrumental scholarship's positioning within the conventions of the 'scholarship of discovery', researchers who connect a moral self to an extreme context are primarily positioning themselves within the normative values of the 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1990). This form of engaged scholarship is targeted at 'the most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, making it the staging ground for action' (Boyer, 1996, p. 11). In management and organization studies, engaged scholarship develops research projects in response to practitioner-defined problems and societal grand challenges (Tsui, 2013; Van de Ven, 2007) and believes research should be judged by morally responsible criteria for its 'impact' on practitioners, stakeholders and society (Bartunek & McKenzie, 2017; Tsui, 2022). By striving to help solve problems that adversely affect human lives, community well-being and material resources in a focal extreme

context, the researcher positions the work of their moral self as upholding the ideals of engaged scholarship and associated principles of responsible management research (Tsui & McKiernan, 2022).

Empirical attention. In support of this subject positioning and the expression of a moral self, the researcher gives problem-focused attention to extremeness during the collection and analysis of empirical materials and elevates the involvement of practitioners or other stakeholders in defining these problems. Whether employing specialist methods like action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) and activist ethnographies (Reedy & King, 2019) or other qualitative methods, the researcher is alert to how particular problems of extremeness might matter for people's lived experiences. For example, when Chowdhury (2017b) interacted with victims of Rana Plaza through field interviews and observations, he directed his attention towards the enormity of the problem of human suffering, how to help people recover, and how to prevent another industrial disaster happening. Another compelling example of this problem-focused attentional mode is Dwyer's research into Australian bushfires as extreme events (Dwyer, 2022; Dwyer & Hardy, 2016). Fixing his attentional priority on how past-oriented public inquiries were keeping governments and society from 'learn[ing] to live with fire in a future-focused way' (Dwyer, 2022), the researcher collected and analysed empirical materials while engaging with emergency management organizations and government as the intended users and audience of the knowledge he produced.

Theorizing practices. The motivational, positional and attentional elements of ideological improvement, as described above, enable theorizing practices that we conceptualize as *change-driven abstraction*. Expressing a moral self through engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) or through a critical interest in an emancipatory take, the researcher develops theory products to directly or indirectly foster change.

More specifically, the researcher focuses on how theory can be produced in ways that might, when used, lead to the change (as in engaged scholarship) or on theory, by provoking deep awareness and emotions, 'being' the change (in the critical camp). Leveraging the interplay between concrete practices in the extreme context (as well as the broader institutions and ideologies associated with them) and abstract theorizing, the researcher constantly iterates between the two to open up fresh insight into how extremeness matters for managing and organizing and with what practical and/or emancipatory consequences. This change-driven abstraction of consequences in the immediate, short term and long term and at personal, professional, organizational and/or institutional levels enables researchers to generate theory that is both important and actionable.

Dwyer's (2022) research into bushfires as extreme events provides an example of how theorizing (practical) change unfolds as a theorizing practice. Dwyer collected and analysed empirical materials in the form of government inquiry reports and public submissions augmented by interviews with firefighters and other stakeholders. Applying sensemaking theories to the empirical materials (Dwyer & Hardy, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2021), Dwyer gleaned sufficient insight to develop a theoretical model of shared responsibility for prospective planning among governments, communities and emergency management organizations. This model advanced established management and organization theories of sensemaking through casting light on their generalizability to natural hazards, and had practical impact as 'a roadmap for practitioners' to improve emergency management practice, government policymaking and community resilience (Dwyer, 2022).

Reflexive labor

Our final mode of engagement is reflexive labor, which is grounded in a researcher's vulnerable self becoming exposed by the extremeness of the context. In contrast to adventuresome

inquiry which nurtures a researcher identity as the ‘adventuring self’, reflexive labor surfaces the ‘vulnerable self’ inside a researcher’s personhood as their body and emotions are exposed to the harms lurking in extreme contexts (Claus et al., 2019; Wright & Wright, 2019). We call this mode of engagement reflexive labor to evoke what has been described as ‘working the hyphens’ in qualitative research (Fine, 1994). In this mode, researchers become reflexively aware of ‘how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants’ (Fine, 1994, p. 72) and in turn of the ‘spaces of possibilities’ that can emerge through working within hyphens such as insiderness-outsiderness (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013, p. 365) or – in the case of EC research – the ‘vulnerable-extreme’ hyphen space. This hyphen space lies between the researcher’s ‘vulnerable self’ and the dangerous and traumatic empirical context that is ‘the extreme’.

Motivation. When a researcher has an experience of vulnerability during the research (Corlett et al., 2019; Hibbert et al., 2022), this can motivate them to reflexively work within the ‘vulnerable-extreme’ hyphen space and open up possibilities to reinterpret theoretical understanding (Hibbert, 2021). We see two ways this motivation might be aroused. First, a researcher who deliberately situates their field work in an extreme context can experience vulnerability through physical, psychological or social harm and stress (Claus et al., 2019; Miralles et al., 2022). Some experiences of vulnerability – such as a near-death accident or illness (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011; Wright & Wright, 2019), witnessing violence, trauma or poverty (Claus et al., 2019; Whiteman, 2010), or losing transportation on a mountaineering expedition in remote terrain (Musca et al., 2014) – may be so profound that they push the researcher to reflexively engage the ‘vulnerable-extreme’ hyphen space in a new and profound way. Second, an alternative route is that a researcher who has lived experience as a practitioner in an extreme context might agentically embrace their vulnerable self and actively work the hyphen space

through auto-ethnography. O’Quinn (2020, 2023), for example, reflexively reinterpreted leadership theory through an auto-ethnographic account of his past experiences as a commissioned officer in the US Army Special Operations Forces.

Subject positioning. Researchers generally position their vulnerability and reflexive stance epistemologically within the interpretivist, social constructionist or critical paradigms (Cunliffe, 2003), and methodologically in the discourse advocating reflexive practice in organizational research (Cutcher et al., 2020; Hibbert, 2021; Hibbert et al., 2014) and in the ‘confessional tale’ when writing an ethnography (Van Maanen, 1988). Less self-aware researchers might not recognize that what they practised when the vulnerable self collided with the extremeness of the context was reflexive labor. However, to paraphrase Hibbert (2021, p. 10), it is not necessary for a researcher to understand or name reflexive labor in order to go on and engage with the extreme context as such.

Empirical attention. Reflexive labor unfolds, we argue, through the researcher paying overlapping layers of attention to how extremeness matters in their own lived experience (Hibbert, 2021), as a particular type of research context (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010) and for healing the vulnerable self (Corlett et al., 2019; Hibbert et al., 2022). Thus, we see the researcher’s reflexive attention to extremeness in empirical materials as being fluid, evolving and pluralistic, and combining ‘looking *at the self* (embodied and emotional reflexive practice) and looking *from the self* (rational and relational reflexive practice) to support critical engagement’ (Hibbert, 2021, p. 12, italics in original).

Whiteman and Cooper’s (2011) ethnographic study provides a vivid illustration. On a field trip in subarctic Canada, Whiteman fell into freezing rapids and almost died. This experience of human vulnerability provoked reflexive awareness of the ‘vulnerable-extreme’ hyphen space, although its value for the research was not immediately recognized: ‘It was the

single most important event of my fieldwork. I didn't know it at the time' (p. 895). Whiteman explains that 'the emotional shock of the accident' (p. 893) prevented attention to empirical materials in the immediate aftermath. She describes how, long after she left the field, her reflexivity evolved and shifted across reflexive attention to the terrain's extremeness in the empirical materials, her bodily and emotional insights of almost dying, and rational reflexivity that suggested the 'model of the world [rooted in existing sensemaking literature] is in error' (p. 893, citing Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 31). These fluid and overlapping layers of reflexive attention to extremeness opened up possibilities for the researcher to reinterpret accepted theories of sensemaking and by building on her own deep experiences generate a new theory of ecological sensemaking (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011).

Theorizing practices. The motivational, positional and attentional elements of reflexive labor, as a mode of engagement grounded in a vulnerable self enables theorizing practices that we conceptualize as *dialectical interrogation*. In contrast to adventuresome inquiry where we have argued that the danger, emotions and physical conditions of the extreme context animate the researcher's personal self and enable phenomenon-driven problematization as a theorizing practice, we propose that in reflexive labor these stimuli prompt an existential awareness that might offer the basis for a deeper 'dialectical interrogation' of how we can generally think about certain phenomena, even aside from what, instrumentally speaking, the usual canons of relevant theory are. Through such interrogation, the researcher can work the hyphens as the vulnerable self gets experienced by disrupting the familiar (Cutcher et al., 2020; Hibbert, 2021) and inviting doubt (Locke et al., 2008). What was once known and familiar now seems doubtful as the vulnerable self interacts with the extreme context. Becoming 'astonished by what is most familiar, and mak[ing] familiar what is strange' (Galibert, 2004, p. 456), the researcher is on an individual quest to

understand their personal experience now that previous foundations are gone, regardless of what this amounts to in terms of general new 'theory' that can be used by others. By grappling to understand and deeply interrogate the experienced events, the researcher may however surface profoundly new concepts and alternative theoretical explanations that better account for how, when, why and for whom extremeness matters.

An illustration of this theorizing practice is again found in Whiteman and Cooper's (2011) study already described above. Reflexive labor enabled Whiteman's vulnerable self to dialectically interrogate how sensemaking theories elevate processes of human social construction while ignoring the way the natural landscape shapes human experience. With previous foundations gone, the authors developed novel theory about the role of landscapes as material constraints on human sensemaking processes, introducing two new concepts (ecological materiality and ecological sensemaking) and explaining when different processes of ecological sensemaking are activated in extreme and mundane situations. In another illustration, Wright describes taking her seriously ill daughter to the hospital emergency department that also served as the field site for a study of professions¹ and how this decision surfaced a vulnerable self and provoked self-reflexivity (Wright & Wright, 2019). Working in the vulnerable-extreme hyphen space enabled her to develop a profoundly new and multi-layered conceptualization by dialectically interrogating social inclusion and local risks and resources in emergency departments as institutional places (Wright et al., 2021; Wright & Wright, 2019).

Integrated Framework: Theorizing as Mode of Engagement

In response to our research question, we have thus far proposed that theorizing in extreme context research is a mode of engagement involving a researcher making connections between different aspects of the self; personal,

professional, moral and vulnerable, and the extreme context. Each self-context connection shapes different modes of engagement in which the researcher's motivations, subject positioning and empirical attention enable particular theorizing practices. We have conceptualized coherent ideal-types of how different modes of engagement give rise to different forms of position, attention and theorizing (adventuresome inquiry, instrumental scholarship, ideological improvement, reflexive labor).

We now consider the implications of these ideal-typical modes of engagement for how in general generative theorizing may be accomplished when researching extreme contexts. A central concern for theorizing in and through extreme contexts is navigating the tension between contextualization and decontextualization when making contributions to knowledge (Bamberger, 2008; Dencker et al., 2023; Johns, 2006). This tension arises because, on the one hand, the context's 'extremeness' allows the researcher to see things that may go unnoticed in normal settings (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010), and to be personally provoked to do so as well, thereby providing opportunities for extending knowledge of management and organizations (Bamberger, 2008; Hällgren et al., 2018). On the other hand, 'extremeness' can hamper the transferability of the knowledge produced due to concerns by journal editors and reviewers that it is too contextualized or is seen as too much of a 'personal' tale (Johns, 2017; Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

We contend that conceptualizing theorizing as mode of engagement offers a more reflexive and dynamic view of accomplishing generative theorizing in and through extreme contexts and opens up different paths for navigating this tension. To tease this out, we explore the impact of the contextualization/decontextualization tension on the nature and scope of the theoretical contributions emanating from each mode of engagement.

In terms of the nature of contributions, the extremeness of the context pertains, first of all, to the nature of the relationship between the theory being built from EC

research and existing theory in management and organization studies (see Figure 1). Drawing on Boxenbaum and Rouleau (2011), we label the relationship with existing theory as either 'complementing' or 'differentiating'. Theorizing in and through EC research *complements* existing management and organization theory when it presents 'new knowledge claims as being continuous with previous knowledge' (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011, p. 279). In contrast, theorizing EC research *differentiates* from existing theory when knowledge claims are discontinuous with prior knowledge and generate a distinct new theoretical understanding of a phenomenon.

In terms of scope, the contextualization/decontextualization tension questions furthermore the scope of contributions to practice from extreme contexts. We distinguish here between specialized and generalized contributions. We categorize contributions as *specialized* when they offer specific guidance for managing the risks, emergencies, disruptions and associated aspects in extreme contexts. We categorize contributions as *generalized* when their implications for practice are broader in scope and less specific to extreme contexts, such as general notions of social injustice or human suffering.

Combining the modes of engagement with the nature and scope of contributions in this way allows us to develop an integrative framework of theorizing in and through extreme contexts as 'mode of engagement'. We present our framework in Figure 1. Along the horizontal axis, we depict the nature of contributions to existing theory as either complementing or differentiating; along the vertical axis, we portray the scope of contributions as specialized or generalized in nature.

We position adventuresome inquiry in the upper right quadrant (differentiating, specialized) of our framework in Figure 1. Phenomenon-driven problematization generates new organizational theory that is differentiated from existing theory through its novel insights and assumptions. We suggest that this novel theory also contributes specialized insights for practice in extreme contexts because

Scope of contributions	<i>Specialized</i>	<p><i>Self-EC connection:</i> Moral self</p> <p><i>Mode of engagement:</i> Ideological Improvement</p> <p><i>Theorizing practices:</i> Change-driven abstraction</p>	<p><i>Self-EC connection:</i> Personal self</p> <p><i>Mode of engagement:</i> Adventuresome Inquiry</p> <p><i>Theorizing practices:</i> Phenomenon-driven problematization</p>
	<i>Generalized</i>	<p><i>Self-EC connection:</i> Professional self</p> <p><i>Mode of engagement:</i> Instrumental Scholarship</p> <p><i>Theorizing practices:</i> Theory elaboration</p>	<p><i>Self-EC connection:</i> Vulnerable self</p> <p><i>Mode of engagement:</i> Reflexive Labor</p> <p><i>Theorizing practices:</i> Dialectical interrogation</p>
		<i>Complementing</i>	<i>Differentiating</i>
Nature of contributions to existing theory			

Figure 1. Framework for theorizing in and through extreme contexts by modes of engagement.

of the personal self’s deep and thoughtful engagement with the constitutive characteristics of extremeness and what this might entail for our in-house, specialized understanding of such contexts.

We position instrumental scholarship in the lower left quadrant (complementing, generalized) in Figure 1. Theory elaboration advances organizational theory by complementing existing theoretical explanations. Since the researcher’s motivations, positioning and empirical attention cohere around mainstream management and organization theory, the theory that is generated from further theory elaboration offers

contributions to knowledge and practice in extreme contexts that are more stylized and generalized in scope.

We position ideological improvement in the upper left quadrant (complementing, specialized) in Figure 1. Change-driven abstraction generates theory that fosters change in ways that complement existing theoretical explanations. The researcher’s motivation to inform and enact concrete change, coupled with empirical attention to practical and/or emancipatory problems for practitioners or societal stakeholders, ensures that theories generated through change-driven abstractions make specialized

contributions that are tuned to changing or bettering the practice of managing and organizing in extreme contexts.

Finally, we position reflexive labor in the lower right quadrant (differentiating, generalized) in Figure 1. Dialectical interrogation advances organizational theory by generating new and different concepts and theoretical accounts as a researcher grapples with and interrogates their own experience and vulnerabilities. The novel concepts and theories that emerge from this reflexive and self-oriented process of theorizing have the potential of offering more fundamental and generalized contributions to our understanding of the practice of managing in extreme contexts.

In presenting our integrative framework of theorizing as modes of engagement in EC research, we do not assume rigid and singular pathways. Each quadrant represents an ideal-typical combination of self-context connection, elements of engagement (motivational, positional, attentional) and theorizing practices that implicate a particular nature and scope for the contribution that arises from the theorizing. As such, this framework provides a typology that offers a clear reference point for researchers engaged in EC projects by furnishing them with insights and guidance on their subject positions, forms of attention and analyses, and the kinds of theorizing involved. To the extent that individual EC researchers are like these ideal-type characterizations, we expect them to engage similarly in their specific projects and with similar outcomes arising from their mode of engagement. Unlike a taxonomy, however, our typological approach is not meant to classify individual EC researchers. Instead, our aim is to develop distinct ideal-typical theoretical profiles of modes of engagement to which actual researchers and projects can be compared, and indeed can compare themselves. Consistent with this perspective, we furthermore suggest that depending on when and how different selves are experienced in relation to the extreme context, a researcher may move between different modes of engagement (i.e. between the different types) at different moments within a

project, between projects and across a career. Below, we explore these dynamics and offer some further practical guidance for how researchers might utilize our framework in this way in their work.

Pluralistic Trajectories and Modes of Engagement

Our integrative framework for theorizing in and through EC research is not prescriptive and, as mentioned, is not meant to rigidly classify and lock a researcher into a single mode of engagement. Since researchers have potentially multiple selves, the framework is rather fluid and dynamic. It allows for pluralistic trajectories for researchers to reflect on their subject position, engage different modes, and invites as well the possibility of combining modes sequentially or in parallel over the course of a single project, within research teams and across an academic career. We elaborate these possibilities below.

Shifting modes of engagement within a research project

We see several possibilities for how researchers could apply our framework in a single project undertaking EC research. Researchers can pursue either adventuresome inquiry, instrumental scholarship, ideological improvement or reflexive labor as a single mode of engagement according to whether they feel a connection between their personal self, professional self, moral self or vulnerable self, and the focal extreme context they plan to study. This might remain unchanged as the project progresses, but there could also be a modal shift.

Such a modal shift may be unplanned and can be triggered when the researcher's experience of the actuality of 'extremeness' during the project surfaces a different aspect of their self. For example, an ethnographer who is initially excited and energized to engage in adventuresome inquiry might find their moral self becomes activated if they witness terrible human suffering or social injustice while in the field, potentially provoking a modal shift to

ideological improvement. In other instances of unplanned modal shifts, a researcher's vulnerable self might become exposed during field work in the extreme context as they personally experience danger, physical harm or trauma. This self-reflexive awareness of emotional vulnerability might play out as unplanned reflexive labor occurring in parallel with the researcher's more intentional mode of adventuresome inquiry, instrumental scholarship, or ideological improvement.

Alongside unplanned modal shifts, our framework accommodates planned shifts in modes of engagement as well. One possibility for planned modal shifts involves separating the 'empirical work' and 'write up' stages of an EC research project by sequencing modes of engagement in that way. We speculate that one common sequence involves a researcher engaging in adventuresome inquiry when designing and conducting their empirical study before pivoting to an instrumental scholarship mode when writing up the project for publication in mainstream journals. Since the adventuresome inquiry mode risks having its legitimacy challenged by audiences of traditional management and organization scholars who might view it as eccentric, irrelevant or overly-reliant on 'the logic of pluck-and-luck discovery' (Van Maanen, 2009, p. 251), a researcher might intentionally write up an adventuresome inquiry project so it appears more consistent with instrumental scholarship (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993).

In a similar vein, a researcher whose field work experiences pushed them into reflexive labor might also plan to shift modes during the writing up. Given the difficulty of convincing audiences that reflexivity requires organizational researchers to authentically report their own painful experiences (Hibbert et al., 2022), the researcher might choose not to report such personal vulnerability in mainstream journal publications. Instead, they might write their published article by concisely describing their work following the adventuresome inquiry, instrumental scholarship or ideological improvement modes and without explicitly acknowledging that reflexive labor helped to interrogate

their experience as part of their theorizing practices. The researcher might in such instances restrict their written accounts of reflexive labor to field diaries, personal journals and publication in books, monographs and non-mainstream outlets (Zilber & Zanoni, 2022).

Multiple modes of engagement and research teams

Our framework furthermore opens up possibilities for purposively combining different modes of engagement within research teams. Assembling teams of researchers who operate within complementary modes of engagement may be a fruitful avenue for generative theorizing in and through EC research since it allows for a more comprehensive array of theorizing practices. A particularly generative team composition might be pairing researchers who are motivated to live out their personal self in the adventuresome inquiry mode with researchers who express their professional self through the instrumental scholarship mode. Because this team composition enables a logical combination of deep phenomenon-driven problematizations with elaborating existing theories, there is potential to generate novel theory with strong and robust contributions to knowledge in both nature and scope. The outcome of this process may be the kind of 'disciplined imagination' that Weick had in mind or the kind of 'interesting' theoretical contributions (Davis, 1971) in which some prior assumptions are disconfirmed (of an existing academic audience) but extended and expanded into a roomier and more profound understanding.

At the same time, it may also be the case that teams comprising a group of researchers whose selves span all four modes of engagement might find their theorizing to be less generative. There are arguably some incompatibilities between each mode's motivational, positional and attentional elements that besides harnessing creativity may also be the source of conflict or confusion and may thus come to stymie, rather than enable, theorizing practices. While we do

not have a specific decision rule for what combinations may be fruitful and which modes may not go well together, we believe that by making explicit the different modes of engagement and by having a shared dialogue among team members about them, this may create mutual understanding as well as foster collaborative working arrangements.

Modes of engagement and pluralistic career trajectories

Our framework is helpful both to management scholars wanting to enhance their skills in conducting EC research and to researchers who have more focused career aspirations as an EC researcher. In terms of general skills enhancement, our framework suggests that researchers may design more meaningful and satisfying projects by reflecting on the self-context connections that motivate them; the degree to which they intend to position their work and themselves as an EC researcher and how; the research design and methods choices that might be needed to empirically attend to the most salient aspects of the context for their motivations as well as highlighting any additional methods training that could be beneficial; and the implications for their theorizing practices and contributions. Our framework can also help facilitate the progress of empirical investigations and theorizing when researchers become 'stuck', such as might be the case when novice EC researchers and management scholars undertake their first projects in an extreme context. A researcher can become stuck in a single mode of engagement that is not meaningful for the self or productive for their particular project. They can also become stuck by naively attempting to engage all modes simultaneously in their single project, which can create confusion. In such instances, our framework can help by clarifying the different ideal-typical modes of engagement and provides a guide or reference for how they might anchor themselves on a particular aspect of their selves to support the completion of the project and a distinctive practice of theorizing.

In terms of offering more focused career guidance for EC researchers, our framework provides a way to think about how a budding EC researcher might wish to engage with extreme contexts and build their expertise and reputation within the EC scholarly community and over the course of their careers. There may be some merit to exploring different modes early and throughout an EC researcher's career, in order to discover, evaluate and clarify the types of research projects that best fit their motivations and personhood. Since extreme contexts go beyond most people's ordinary life experiences and comfort zone (de Rond, 2012), a researcher is liable to be surprised by their own reactions to them. It may only be through engagement that an EC researcher discovers, for instance, the energizing feeling of being where the 'extreme' action is in adventuresome inquiry or a sense of moral purpose to 'extreme' scholarship in ideological improvement. Likewise, undertaking projects in different modes of engagement might help the novice EC researcher develop their methodological skills, negotiate the challenges of field access (Rantatalo et al., 2018) and gain confidence in using different types of theorizing practices, especially if they incrementally broaden the scope of the projects they work on (Leung, 2014). They might come to see, for instance, how the specialized contributions to knowledge that their theorizing might generate in the one mode can inform the basis for a study in another mode and potentially contribute to a more generalized theoretical understanding; or vice versa.

This dynamic raises an interesting question about the long-term career benefits for aspiring EC researchers of restricting, or not, the modes of engagement that guide their work. An EC researcher who devotes their career to a single mode of engagement has the potential to gain recognition for an area of competence (Zuckerman et al., 2003) and enough mastery of the rules in a domain to generate significant theoretical advances from that angle (Mannucci & Yong, 2018). Thus, an early-career EC researcher who is excited to concentrate their

personal self in the Adventuresome inquiry mode might quickly establish a reputation in the EC scholarly community as someone with a curiosity for extreme phenomena and who is gaining deep expertise in ethnographic methods in risky, emergency, disruptive or surprising contexts. In contrast, an early-career EC researcher juggling multiple modes of engagement may fail to grow a recognizable identity and may struggle to comprehend the varied methodologies and discourses associated with the different modes.

Yet, at the same time, failing to branch out to other modes of engagement as the EC researcher's career progresses could potentially lead to stagnation as well. EC researchers who repeatedly pursue similar projects may be typecast by their peers, appearing to have a limited range of skills (Zuckerman et al., 2003), and may themselves miss out on opportunities to break free from ingrained habits of thinking (Kutscher & Mayrhofer, 2023; Mannucci & Yong, 2018). One possible solution is for the aspiring EC researcher to craft a sequential career trajectory by starting with the more conventional mode of instrumental scholarship to establish scholarly credibility before embarking on bolder and, for some, eccentric projects in adventuresome inquiry or ideological improvement. This could help the EC researcher grow personally and professionally while avoiding the pitfalls of stagnation.

In addition to career-long identity trajectories as an EC researcher, our framework accommodates for temporary and short-lived forays into EC research. Opportunities to be involved in a one-off project can emerge for management and organizational scholars who may not normally undertake EC research. The most common is when a scholar with expertise in a particular management or organization theory spots an opportunity to theorize by studying a particular extreme context and initiates or is invited to join a project in the mode of instrumental scholarship. We suggest that many projects like this emerged in the Covid-19 pandemic, with management and organization scholars asking themselves 'what is this extreme

disruption a case of for my theoretical interests?' (Langley, 2021). In a related vein, we see potential for scholars to find one-off 'passion projects' popping up in both adventuresome inquiry and ideological improvement modes. A management and organization scholar can connect an extreme context to their personal or moral self by temporarily bringing into their research world some of the personal attributes, beliefs, life experiences and training that also define themselves (Schein, 1978). For example, scholars who enjoy extreme sports or hobbies, or have served in the military, might set out to better understand these extreme phenomena – which are uniquely meaningful to the personal self and are often given shape through the mode of adventuresome inquiry. Other scholars whose local community has been ravaged by a natural disaster or terrorist attack might be galvanized to develop a one-off research project in the mode of ideological improvement.

We argue that because different aspects of the self are central to modes of engagement, even these types of one-off projects in EC research involve some degree of experimentation with provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999). This understanding additionally suggests that as a management or organizational scholar is being exposed to scholarly images, literature and ways of doing research that foreground extremeness and potential for harm, EC research may in fact become more enduring – or not – within that scholar's career trajectory. This continuity depends of course on the individual scholar's subsequent motivations and interests, whether and how they continue to connect aspects of their self to extremeness, and the nature and intensity of emotions (e.g. excitement, fear, despair) they experience when undertaking research in these settings.

Discussion

Our integrative framework of theorizing as mode of engagement makes two contributions to management and organization studies. Our first contribution advances the extreme contexts literature. Building on and extending past

conceptual work on extreme contexts that has focused on organizing and stocktaking the literature (e.g. Bundy et al., 2017; Hällgren et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017), we clarify and articulate how theory salient to organizational settings involving risks, emergencies and disruptions is generated through different modes of engagement that enable a variety of theorizing practices. Our framework offers a broad synthesis of the different paths that researchers can have in mind when engaging with the extremeness of a context to generate theory about such contexts and also about management and organizational phenomena more generally. Up until this point, specific and concrete guidance on how to leverage the extremeness of the context to build theory has largely been missing from the organizational literature, leaving EC researchers to struggle to theorize about and with their empirical material of the ‘extreme’.

Our integrative framework shows how management and organization researchers can build both rigorous and relevant theory from EC research. It highlights how different modes of engagement with contexts characterized by extremeness can advance theoretical understanding. In doing so, it offers a basis for productive research conversations and collaborations within and across different modes of engagement. Scholars who pursue adventuresome inquiry have historically been positioned at the centre of the EC literature. By highlighting three other modes of engagement that can be followed we expand our understanding of common ways of doing EC research. Thus, our framework has the potential to make what counts as an extreme context for research more encompassing, as well as more fluid and dynamic. We encourage researchers who apply our framework in their own work to reflect on these implications. Future research examining how the definition of an extreme context is shaped and reshaped by its adoption would be beneficial. Such studies may reflect on the accumulation of knowledge within and across each of the four modes of engagement, as well as further nuance and detail the framework and its coverage of the EC field of research.

Our second contribution advances the broader literature on theorizing in management and organization studies by taking serious account of who is the researcher (or the researcher’s selves) and what are their motivations for undertaking empirical research. Contrary to the theorizing strategies and typologies that have recently pervaded the literature (Cornelissen et al., 2021; Cornelissen & Durand, 2014; Cutcher et al., 2020; Patriotta, 2017; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2020), our integrative framework provides an innovative perspective on theorizing by shining new light on the relationship between the researcher identity and the theorizing practices. Even though prior typologies propose a practical view of theorizing and encourage pluralism, they tend to remain embedded in neutral scientific categories (Cunliffe, 2022). To illustrate, while Sandberg and Alvesson (2020) include ‘purpose’ (researcher’s interest) and ‘phenomenon’ (context) in the criteria to elaborate their theorizing types, they still anchor their other categories in conventional scientific discourse. Our integrative framework of theorizing as mode of engagement moves beyond this traditional way of constructing theorizing typologies by explicitly accounting for how a researcher’s identity and personhood animates theorizing through their assumptions and choices about research contexts.² We contend that for EC research considering the self-context connections with theorizing practices is especially appropriate given the extremeness of the context. From this perspective, future research may usefully inquire into the pliability of the self-concept, and whether indeed, as we have argued, EC researchers can switch between different selves as part of a research project or during their careers. We encourage further research to examine these important questions.

Moreover, our integrative framework has significant implications beyond EC research as well. Specifically, it answers recent calls in management and organization studies to take into account the researcher’s life experience and personhood (Shepherd et al., 2021; Wiklund, 2016; Wright & Wright, 2019) when

developing new ways of researching and pursuing innovative research agendas. Put differently, the researcher's motives and lived research experience matter in the process of generative theorizing. By proposing a more reflexive and dynamic view of theorizing with empirical contexts, our framework positions the different ways of theorizing outside conventional classifications and conceptions of theory. In approaching different types of theorizing as a function of a researcher's mode of engagement and in putting them in relation with one another instead of expounding their differences, we contend that our framework offers multiple pathways towards generating significant and more actionable theorizing. In a world where mutations in contexts are burgeoning, our framework points to the importance of pluralism in theorizing and knowledge production, suggesting that alternating viewpoints and perhaps triangulating between them might enable scholars to get at better questions and answers and more profound as well as actionable forms of knowledge.

In other words, we suggest that these modes of engagement in theorizing matter in both extreme and non-extreme contexts. Nevertheless, we propose that the operation of empirical contexts in the researcher's mode of engagement is more pronounced in EC research because their particularities provide researchers with significant physical, psychological or material danger to organizational members and to others (Hällgren et al., 2018; Hannah et al., 2009), including the researcher. While this means that modes of engagement connecting different aspects of the self to the extreme context will stand out more clearly in extreme contexts compared to more mundane organizational settings, we contend that the general insight that empirical contexts matter as part of a researcher's mode of engagement has applicability to non-extreme contexts as well. We invite future research to draw on our theoretical framework and explore how, when, where and for whom a meaningful sense of self operates in research in extreme as well as non-extreme contexts.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

April L. Wright  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1582-5107>

Notes

1. The account of reflexive labor was published separately in an essay and was co-authored by the researcher and her daughter. The essay was cross-referenced in the research article published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*. The essay and article suggest that while the study was initially and primarily designed and conducted according to instrumental scholarship, theorizing was enhanced by an experience of vulnerability that prompted reflexive labor.
2. Other traditions, such as critical scholarship, explicitly attend to this as well.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Journal*, *36*, 247–271.
- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2013). *Constructing research questions: Doing interesting research*. Sage.
- Aquino, K., & Reed, A., II. (2002). The self-importance of moral identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 1432–1440.
- Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management*, *34*, 325–374.
- Ballesteros, L., Useem, M., & Wry, T. (2017). Masters of disasters? An empirical analysis of how societies benefit from corporate disaster aid. *Academy of Management Journal*, *60*, 1682–1708.
- Bamberger, P. A. (2008). Beyond contextualization: Using context theories to narrow the

- micro-macro gap in management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 51, 839–846.
- Bamberger, P. A., & Pratt, M. G. (2010). Moving forward by looking back: Reclaiming unconventional research contexts and samples in organizational scholarship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53, 665–671.
- Bapuji, H., Patel, C., Ertug, G., & Allen, D. G. (2020). Corona crisis and inequality: Why management research needs a societal turn. *Journal of Management*, 46, 1205–1222.
- Bartunek, J. M., & McKenzie, J. (2017). *Academic-practitioner relationships; Developments, complexities and opportunities*. Routledge.
- Beamish, T. D. (2018). Risk, crisis, and organizational failure: Towards a post-rationalist view. In R. P. Gephart, Jr., C. C. Miller, & K. Svedberg Helgesson (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to risk, crisis and emergency management* (pp. 87–107). Routledge.
- Bigley, G. A., & Roberts, K. H. (2001). The incident command system: High reliability organizing for complex and volatile task environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 1281–1299.
- Bourgeois, L. J. (1979). Toward a method of middle-range theorizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 4, 443–447.
- Boxenbaum, E., & Rouleau, L. (2011). New knowledge products as bricolage: Metaphors and scripts in organizational theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 272–296.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 1, 11–20.
- Buchanan, D. A., & Hällgren, M. (2019). Surviving a zombie apocalypse: Leadership configurations in extreme contexts. *Management Learning*, 50, 152–170.
- Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M. D., Short, C. E., & Coombs, W. T. (2017). Crises and crisis management. *Journal of Management*, 43, 1661–1692.
- Cappellaro, G., Compagni, A., & Vaara, E. (2021). Maintaining strategic ambiguity for protection: Struggles over opacity, equivocality, and absurdity around the Sicilian Mafia. *Academy of Management Journal*, 64(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.1086>
- Chowdhury, R. (2017a). The Rana Plaza disaster and the complicit behavior of elite NGOs. *Organization*, 24, 938–949.
- Chowdhury, R. (2017b). Rana Plaza fieldwork and academic anxiety. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54, 1111–1117.
- Cilesiz, S., & Greckhamer, T. (2022). Methodological socialization and identity: A bricolage study of pathways toward qualitative research in doctoral education. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25, 337–370.
- Claus, L., de Rond, M., Howard-Grenville, J., & Lodge, J. (2019). When fieldwork hurts: On the lived experience of conducting research in unsettling contexts. In T. B. Zilber, J. M. Amis, & J. Mair (Eds.), *The production of managerial knowledge and organizational theory: New approaches to writing, producing and consuming theory*. Research in the Sociology of Organization (Vol. 59, pp. 157–172). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Clegg, S. (2013). *Power, rule and domination: A critical and empirical understanding of power in sociological theory and organizational life*. Routledge.
- Colquitt, J. A., Lepine, J. A., Zapata, C. P., & Wild, R. E. (2011). Trust in typical and high-reliability contexts: Building and reacting to trust among firefighters. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54, 999–1015.
- Corlett, S., Mavin, S., & Beech, N. (2019). Reconceptualizing vulnerability and its value for managerial identity and learning. *Management Learning*, 50, 556–575.
- Cornelissen, J., Höllerer, M. A., & Seidl, D. (2021). What theory is and can be: Forms of theorizing in organizational scholarship. *Organization Theory*, 2(3), 1–19.
- Cornelissen, J. P., & Durand, R. (2014). Moving forward: Developing theoretical contributions in management studies. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51, 995–1022.
- Creed, W. E. D., Gray, B., Hollerer, M. A., Karam, C. M., & Reay, T. (2022). Organizing for social and institutional change in response to disruption, division, and displacement: Introduction to the special issue. *Organization Studies*, 43, 1535–1557.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2003). Reflexive inquiry in organizational research: Questions and possibilities. *Human Relations*, 56, 983–1003.

- Cunliffe, A. L. (2022). Must I grow a pair of balls to theorize about theory in organization and management studies? *Organization Theory*, 3(3), 1–28.
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Karunanayake, G. (2013). Working within hyphen-spaces in ethnographic research: Implications for research identities and practice. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16, 364–392.
- Cutcher, L., Hardy, C., Riach, K., & Thomas, R. (2020). Reflections on reflexive theorizing: The need for a little more conversation. *Organization Theory*, 1, 1–28.
- Davis, M. S. (1971). That's interesting! Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1(2), 309–344.
- de Rond, M. (2012). Soldier, surgeon, photographer, fly: Fieldwork beyond the comfort zone. *Strategic Organization*, 10, 256–262.
- de Rond, M., Holeman, I., & Howard-Grenville, J. (2019). Sensemaking from the body: An enactive ethnography of rowing the Amazon. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62, 1961–1988.
- de Rond, M., & Lok, J. (2016). Some things can never be unseen: The role of context in psychological injury at war. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59, 1965–1993.
- de Rond, M., Lok, J., & Marrison, A. (2022). To catch a predator: The lived experience of extreme practices. *Academy of Management Journal*, 65, 870–902.
- Dencker, J. C., Gruber, M., Miller, T., Rouse, E. D., & von Krogh, G. (2023). From the editors: Positioning research on novel phenomena: The winding road from periphery to core. *Academy of Management Journal*, 68, 1295–1302.
- Dwyer, G. (2022). *Making sense of natural disasters: The learning vacuum of bushfire public inquiries*. Springer.
- Dwyer, G., & Hardy, C. (2016). We have not lived long enough: Sensemaking and learning from bushfire in Australia. *Management Learning*, 47, 45–64.
- Dwyer, G., Hardy, C., & Maguire, S. (2021). Post-inquiry sensemaking: The case of 'Black Saturday' bushfires. *Organization Studies*, 42, 637–661.
- Edmondson, A. C. (2003). Speaking up in the operating room: How team leaders promote learning in interdisciplinary action teams. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40, 1419–1452.
- Farny, S., Kibler, E., & Down, S. (2019). Collective emotions in institutional creation work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62, 765–799.
- Feldman, M. S., Worline, M., Baker, N., & Lowerson Bredow, V. (2022). Continuity as patterning: A process perspective on continuity. *Strategic Organization*, 20, 80–109.
- Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In D. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 70–82). Sage.
- Galibert, C. (2004). Some preliminary notes on actor-observer anthropology. *International Social Science Journal*, 56, 455–466.
- Ganesh, S. (2014). Unraveling the confessional tale: Passion and dispassion in fieldwork. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28, 448–457.
- Geiger, D., Danner-Schroder, A., & Kremser, W. (2021). Getting ahead of time – performing temporal boundaries to coordinate routines under temporal uncertainty. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66, 220–264.
- George, G., Howard-Grenville, J., Joshi, A., & Tihanyi, L. (2016). Understanding and tackling societal grand challenges through management research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59, 1880–1895.
- Gephart, R. P., Jr. (1993). The textual approach: Risk and blame in disaster sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 1465–1514.
- Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4, 75–91.
- Gkeredakis, M., & Constantinides, P. (2019). Phenomenon-based problematisation: Coordinating in the digital era. *Information and Organization*, 29(3), 100254.
- Goffman, E. (1969). *Where the action is: Three essays*. Allen Lane.
- Golden, S., Chang, C. H., & Kozlowski, S. (2018). Teams in isolated, confined, and extreme (ICE) environments: A review and integration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39, 701–715.
- Golden-Biddle, K., & Locke, K. (1993). Appealing work: An investigation of how ethnographic texts convince. *Organization Science*, 4, 595–616.

- Gregg, H. R., Restubog, S. L., Dasborough, M., Xu, C., Deen, C. M., & He, Y. (2022). When disaster strikes! An interdisciplinary review of disasters and their organizational consequences. *Journal of Management*, *48*, 1382–1429.
- Hällgren, M., Geiger, D., Rouleau, L., Sutcliffe, K., Vaara, E., & Dalpiaz, E. (2022). Organizing and strategizing in and for extreme contexts: Temporality, embodiment, materiality. *Journal of Management Studies*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/pb-assets/assets/14676486/SI-OSEC%20Call%20for%20Papers%20Aug%2021-1631023574537.pdf>
- Hällgren, M., & Rouleau, L. (2019). Researching risk, emergency and crisis: Taking stock of research methods on extreme contexts and moving forward. In R. P. Gephart, C. C. Miller, & K. Svedberg Helgesson (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to risk, emergency and crisis management* (pp. 176–191). Routledge.
- Hällgren, M., Rouleau, L., & de Rond, M. (2018). A matter of life or death: How extreme context research matters for management and organization studies. *Academy of Management Annals*, *12*, 111–153.
- Hannah, D. R. (2020). Generative curiosity three years on: Encouraging expansionist curiosity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *29*, 46–50.
- Hannah, S. T., Uhl-Bien, M., Avolio, B. J., & Cavarretta, F. L. (2009). A framework for examining leadership in extreme contexts. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *20*, 897–919.
- Hansen, H., & Quinn Trank, C. (2016). This is going to hurt: Compassionate research methods. *Organizational Research Methods*, *19*, 352–375.
- Hardy, C., Maguire, S., Power, M., & Tsoukas, H. (2020). Organizing risk: Organization and management theory for the risk society. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*, 1032–1066.
- Helms, W. S., & Patterson, K. D. W. (2014). Eliciting acceptance for “illicit” organizations: The positive implications of stigma for MMA organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, *57*, 1453–1484.
- Hibbert, P. (2021). *How to be a reflexive researcher*. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Hibbert, P., Beech, N., Callagher, L., & Siedlok, F. (2022). After the pain: Reflexive practice, emotion work and learning. *Organization Studies*, *43*, 797–817.
- Hibbert, P., Sillince, J., Diefenbach, T., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2014). Relationally reflexive practice: A generative approach to theory development in qualitative research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *17*, 278–298.
- Hu, Q., Connolly Knox, C., & Kapucu, N. (2014). What have we learned since September 11, 2001? A network study of the Boston Marathon Bombings response. *Public Administration Review*, *74*, 698–712.
- Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*, 764–791.
- Jané, S. E., Fernandez, V., & Hällgren, M. (2022). Shit happens. How do we make sense of that? *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, *17*, 425–441. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-12-2021-2261>
- Johns, G. (2006). The essential impact of context on organizational behaviour. *Academy of Management Review*, *31*, 386–408.
- Johns, G. (2017). Reflections on the 2016 Decade Award: Incorporating context in organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, *42*, 577–595.
- Kent, D. (2019). Giving meaning to everyday work after terrorism. *Organization Studies*, *40*, 975–994.
- Klein, K. J., Ziegert, J. C., Knight, A. P., & Xiao, Y. (2006). Dynamic delegation: Shared, hierarchical, and deindividualized leadership in extreme action teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *51*, 590–621.
- Kornberger, M., Meyer, R. E., Frey-Heger, C., Gatzweiler, M., & Martí, I. (2021). Collective action in crisis? *Organization Studies*. https://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/OSS/OS_SI_Collective%20Action%20in%20Crises_Call%20for%20Papers-1598371185580.pdf
- Kutscher, G., & Mayrhofer, W. (2023). Mind the setback! Enacted sensemaking in young workers’ early career transitions. *Organization Studies*, *44*, 1127–1149.
- Langley, A. (2021). What is “this” a case of? Generative theorising for disruptive times. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *30*, 251–258.
- Leung, M. D. (2014). Dilettante or renaissance person? How the order of job experiences affects hiring in an external labor market. *American Sociological Review*, *79*, 136–158.

- Locke, K., Golden-Biddle, K., & Feldman, M. (2008). Making doubt generative: Rethinking the role of doubt in the research process. *Organization Science, 19*, 907–918.
- Lohrke, F. T., Ahlstrom, D., & Bruton, G. D. (2012). Extending turnaround process research: Important lessons from the U.S. Civil War. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 21*, 217–234.
- Madsen, P. M. (2009). These lives will not be lost in vain: Organizational learning from disaster in US coal mining. *Organization Science, 20*, 861–875.
- Maier, M. (1998). Promoting organizational and scholarly transformation: Lessons from the creation of the Challenger videocase. *Journal of Management Development, 17*, 273–293.
- Maier, M. (2002). Ten years after a major malfunction: Reflections on the Challenger syndrome. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 11*, 282–292.
- Mannucci, P. V., & Yong, K. (2018). The differential impact of knowledge depth and knowledge breadth on creativity over individual careers. *Academy of Management Journal, 61*, 1741–1763.
- Maynard, M. T., Kennedy, D., & Resick, C. (2018). Teamwork in extreme environments: Lessons, challenges, and opportunities. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39*, 695–700.
- McGuire, M., & Schneck, D. (2010). What if Hurricane Katrina hit in 2020? The need for strategic management of disasters. *Public Administration Review, 70*(s1), s201–s207.
- Merton, R. K. (1957). *Social theory and social structure*. The Free Press.
- Miralles, M., Lee, B., Dörfler, V., & Stierand, M. (2022). Investigating trauma: Methodological, emotional and ethical challenges for the qualitative researcher. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 17*, 397–405.
- Musca, G., Mellet, C., Simoni, G., Sitri, F., & De Vogüé, S. (2014). “Drop your boat!”: The discursive co-construction of project renewal. The case of the Darwin mountaineering expedition in Patagonia. *International Journal of Project Management, 32*, 1157–1169.
- O’Quinn, C. V. (2020). *Leadership and strategy as practice* [Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Queensland].
- O’Quinn, C. V. (2023). Lipstick on the pig. *Organization Studies, 44*, 300–301.
- Patriotta, G. (2017). Crafting papers for publication: Novelty and convention in academic writing. *Journal of Management Studies, 54*, 747–759.
- Peredo, A. M., Abdelnour, S., Adler, P., Banerjee, B., Bapuji, H., Calas, M., Chertkovskaya, E., Colbourne, R., Contu, A., Crane, A., Evans, M. G., Hirsch, P., Osorio, A. E., Ozakazanc-Pan, B., Smircich, L., & Weber, G. (2022). We are boiling: Management scholars speaking out on Covid-19 and social justice. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 31*, 339–357.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1990). Longitudinal field research on change: Theory and practice. *Organization Science, 1*, 267–292.
- Pinder, C. C., & Moore, L. F. (1980). *Middle range theory and the study of organizations*. Martinus Nijhoff.
- Pratt, M. G., Lepisto, D. A., & Dane, E. (2019). The hidden side of trust: Supporting and sustaining leaps of faith among firefighters. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 64*, 398–434.
- Rantatalo, O., Lindberg, O., Kihlberg, R., & Hällgren, M. (2018). Negotiations and research bargains: Bending professional norms in the effort to gain field access. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*(1), 1–11.
- Rao, H., & Greve, H. R. (2018). Disasters and community resilience: Spanish flu and the formation of retail cooperatives in Norway. *Academy of Management Journal, 61*, 5–25.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage.
- Reedy, P. C., & King, D. R. (2019). Critical performativity in the field: Methodological principles for activist ethnographers. *Organizational Research Methods, 22*, 564–598.
- Rivard, S. (2021). Theory building is neither an art or a science. It is a craft. *Journal of Information Technology, 36*, 316–328.
- Rouleau, L., de Rond, M., & Musca, G. (2014). From the ethnographic turn to new forms of organizational ethnography. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 3*(1), 2–9.
- Rouleau, L., Hällgren, M., & de Rond, M. (2021). Covid-19 and our understanding of risk, emergencies, and crises. *Journal of Management Studies, 58*, 245–248.
- Rouleau, L., Musca, G., Perez, M., & Giordano, Y. (2013). The Darwin mountaineering expedition in Patagonia: A case of successful leadership failure. In C. M. Giannantonio & A. E. Hurley-Hanson (Eds.), *Extreme leadership* (pp. 62–71). Edward Elgar.
- Rousseau, D. M., & Fried, Y. (2001). Location, location, location: Contextualising organizational

- research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 1–13.
- Rudolph, J. W., & Reppenig, N. P. (2002). Disaster dynamics: Understanding the role of quantity in organizational collapse. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 1–30.
- Sandberg, J., & Alvesson, M. (2020). Meanings of theory: Clarifying theory through typification. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58, 487–516.
- Schein, E. H. (1978). *Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs*. Addison-Wesley.
- Schmutz, J. B., Bienefeld, N., Maynard, M. T., & Rico, R. (2023). Exceeding the ordinary: A framework for examining teams across the extremeness continuum and its impact on future research. *Group & Organization Management*, 48, 581–628.
- Sharma, P., Toubiana, M., Lashley, K., F., M., Rogers, K., & Ruebottom, T. (2023). Honing the craft of qualitative data collection in extreme contexts. *Journal of Management Inquiry*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10564926231194271>
- Shepherd, D. A., Wiklund, J., & Dimov, D. (2021). Envisioning entrepreneurship's future: Introducing me-search and research agendas. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45, 955–966.
- Suddaby, R. (2010). Editor's comments: Construct clarity in theories of management and organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 35, 346–357.
- Tihanyi, L. (2020). From 'that's interesting' to 'that's important'. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63, 329–331.
- Tilcsik, A., & Marquis, C. (2013). Punctuated generosity: How mega-events and natural disasters affect corporate philanthropy in U.S. communities. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 58, 111–148.
- Toubiana, M., & Ruebottom, T. (2022). Stigma hierarchies: The internal dynamics of stigmatization in the sex work occupation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 67, 515–552.
- Tsui, A. S. (2013). Making research engaged: Implications for HRD scholarship. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 24, 137–143.
- Tsui, A. S. (2022). From traditional research to responsible research: The necessity of scientific freedom and scientific responsibility for better societies. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 9, 1–32.
- Tsui, A. S., & McKiernan, P. (2022). Understanding scientific freedom and scientific responsibility in business and management research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 59, 1604–1627.
- Tushman, M., & O'Reilly, C. (2007). Research and relevance: Implications of Pasteur's quadrant for doctoral programs and faculty development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 769–774.
- Valentine, M. (2018). When equity seems unfair: The role of justice enforceability in temporary team coordination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61, 2081–2105.
- Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). *Engaged scholarship: A guide for organizational and social research*. Oxford University Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography* (1st ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (2009). A song for my supper: More tales of the field. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13, 240–255.
- Van Maanen, J. (2010). You gotta have a grievance: Locating heartbreak in ethnography. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19, 338–341.
- Vergne, J. P. (2012). Stigmatized categories and public disapproval of organizations: A mixed methods study of the global arms industry, 1996–2007. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55, 1027–1052.
- Weick, K. E. (1974). Amendments to organizational theorizing. *Academy of Management Journal*, 17, 487–502.
- Weick, K. E. (1989). Theory construction as disciplined imagination. *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 516–531.
- Weick, K. E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 628–652.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (1999). Organizing for high reliability: Processes of collective mindfulness. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 21, 81–123.
- Weick, K. (2007). The generative properties of richness. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 14–19.
- Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2007). *Managing the unexpected: Resilient performance in an age of uncertainty* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Whetten, D. A. (1989). What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 490–495.

- Whiteman, G. (2010). Management studies that breaks your heart. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19, 328–337.
- Whiteman, G., & Cooper, W. H. (2011). Ecological sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54, 889–911.
- Wiklund, J. (2016). Re-search = me-search. In D. Audretsch & E. Lehmann (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to the makers of modern entrepreneurship* (pp. 233–245). Routledge.
- Williams, G., Irving, G., Wright, A. L., & Middleton, S. (2022). Managing job-related diversity processes in high-reliability teams in the emergency department. *British Journal of Management*, 33, 502–518.
- Williams, T., Gruber, D., Sutcliffe, K., Shepherd, D., & Zhao, E. Y. (2017). Organizational response to adversity: Fusing crisis management and resilience research streams. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11, 733–769.
- Wright, A. L., Meyer, A. M., Reay, T., & Staggs, J. (2021). Maintaining places of social inclusion: Ebola and the emergency department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66, 42–85.
- Wright, A. L., & Wright, C. R. (2019). When research and personal lifeworlds collide. In T. B. Zilber, J. M. Amis, & J. Mair (Eds.), *The production of managerial knowledge and organizational theory: New approaches to writing, producing and consuming theory*. Research in the Sociology of Organizations (Vol. 59, pp. 255–273). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Wright, A. L., Zammuto, R. F., & Liesch, P. W. (2017). Maintaining the values of a profession: institutional work and moral emotions in the emergency department. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60, 200–237.
- Wright, A. L., Zammuto, R. F., Liesch, P. W., Middleton, S., Hibbert, P., Burke, J., & Brazil, V. (2016). Evidence-based management in practice: Opening up the decision process, decision-maker and context. *British Journal of Management*, 27, 161–178.
- Zilber, T. B., & Zanoni, P. (2022). Templates of ethnographic writing in organization studies: Beyond the hegemony of the detective story. *Organization Research Methods*, 25, 371–404.
- Zuckerman, E. W., Kim, T.-Y., Ukanwa, K., & von Rittmann, J. (2003). Robust identities or nonentities? Typecasting in the feature-film labor market. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 1018–1074.

Author biographies

April L. Wright is Professor of Organization Studies at Warwick Business School, United Kingdom. Her research explores how institutions are changed, maintained and disrupted, with a particular focus on professions and frontline professional work. She has conducted an extensive program of extreme contexts field research studying hospital emergency departments in Australia. Her research has been published in leading international journals including *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Studies*, and *British Journal of Management*.

Derin Kent is Assistant Professor of Organization Studies at Warwick Business School, United Kingdom. His research explores how people work and thrive in extreme contexts that are physically or psychologically dangerous. To explore these topics, he has conducted research with storm chasing teams, seafaring crews, and physicians responding to lethal viruses, embedding as an ethnographer where possible.

Markus Hällgren is a professor in management at Umeå University in Sweden. He leads the TripleED research program and co-coordinates the international research network Organizing Extreme Contexts. His research interests include the lived experience of extreme contexts, such as mountaineering, the police, ski guiding, and zombie apocalypses.

Linda Rouleau is professor of strategy and organization theory at the management department of HEC Montreal. Her research work focuses on strategizing and sensemaking in pluralistic contexts and she has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Annals*, *Organization Science*, *Accounting, Organization and Society*, *Journal of Management Studies* and *Human Relations*. She is involved in leading an international and interdisciplinary network on “Organizing Extreme Contexts.”