Organization Studies

http://oss.sagepub.com

Completing the Practice Turn in Strategy Research

Richard Whittington

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://oss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/27/5/613

Published by:

$SAGE

http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:

European Group for Organizational Studies

Additional services and information for *Organization Studies* can be found at:

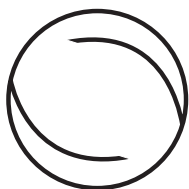**Email Alerts:** http://oss.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts

Subscriptions: http://oss.sagepub.com/subscriptions

Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav

Permissions: http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

Citations http://oss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/27/5/613

Completing the Practice Turn in Strategy Research

Richard Whittington

Abstract

*Richard
Whittington*
Saïd Business
School, University
of Oxford, UK

This paper identifies a practice turn in current strategy research, treating strategy as something people *do*. However, it argues that this turn is incomplete in that researchers currently concentrate either on strategy activity at the intra-organizational level or on the aggregate effects of this activity at the extra-organizational level. The paper proposes a framework for strategy research that integrates these two levels based on the three concepts of strategy praxis, strategy practices and strategy practitioners. The paper develops implications of this framework for research, particularly with regard to the impact of strategy practices on strategy praxis, the creation and transfer of strategy practices and the making of strategy practitioners. The paper concludes by outlining the distinctive emphases of the practice perspective within the strategy discipline.

Keywords: practice, strategy theory, process, strategists

This paper addresses a challenge raised by a current shift in our conception of strategy. Traditionally, the strategy discipline has treated strategy as a property of organizations: an organization *has* a strategy of some kind or other. Increasingly, however, strategy is being seen also as a practice: strategy is something people *do* (e.g. Hambrick 2004; Jarzabkowski 2004). This recognition of strategy as a practice points in two directions. On the one hand, we are invited to dive deep into organizations to engage with people's strategy activity in all its intimate detail (Johnson et al. 2003; Samra-Fredricks 2003). Here, typically, strategy is a demanding kind of work, which managers must master. On the other hand, we are confronted by the aggregation of all this activity into a bigger phenomenon that has powerful and pervasive effects on society at large (Ghemawat 2002; Clark 2004). Here strategy is in a sense an industry, whose members in business, consulting and beyond collectively produce the strategies and practices that help shape our world.

It is this bifurcation between intra-organizational activity and extra-organizational aggregation that sets the challenge for this paper. Advancing strategy practice research requires a more integrated view. The successes and failures of intra-organizational activity are often traceable to external context; aggregate trends need close interrogation for what is really being done in their name. Drawing upon practice perspectives developed in social theory and other managerial disciplines, this paper proposes a framework capable of

DOI: 10.1177/0170840606064101

building a more integrated understanding of strategy practice, both as an activity within organizations that is central to managerial work and as a phenomenon that extends outside organizations with potential influence upon whole societies.

The paper continues as follows. The next section locates the current re-conceptualization of strategy within a wider 'practice turn' in social theory and management research more generally, in which detailed activity and societal context are closely linked. The following section identifies a similar but incomplete turn in strategy research, with intra- and extra-organizational approaches as yet weakly integrated. The third section develops the paper's three central concepts of strategy praxis, strategy practices and strategy practitioners, and links them together within an integrated framework capable of driving forward strategy practice research. The next section draws four critical implications from this framework, each generating broad questions for further research, as follows: how do standard practices actually impact upon strategy activity; how are influential strategy practices produced; what kinds of practitioners are most important in transferring and occasionally innovating strategy practices; and, finally, how do people become effective strategy practitioners? The conclusion draws from these questions a broader agenda for strategy practice research, one distinct from traditional strategy content and process approaches.

The Practice Turn

Practice in Social Theory

The strategy discipline's growing engagement with activity fits with a wider 'practice turn' in contemporary social theory, gathering momentum since the 1980s (Schatzki et al. 2001; Reckwitz 2002). Seminal theorists of this practice turn include Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens. These theorists differ in detail, but generally they share an ambition to overcome social theory's ancient dualism between what Schatzki (2005) characterizes as 'individualism' and 'societism'. In this view, individualists attribute too much to individual human actors, neglecting macro phenomena, while societists are over-impressed by large social forces, forgetting the micro. Practice theorists aim to respect both the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social. To the individualists, they insist there is such a thing as society; to the societists, they affirm the significance of individual activity.

We see here, already, three core themes for practice theory. First, there is society. In their different ways, practice theorists are concerned with how social 'fields' (Bourdieu 1990) or 'systems' (Giddens 1984) define the practices — shared understandings, cultural rules, languages and procedures — that guide and enable human activity. We find this, for instance, in Foucault's (1977) attention to how society's disciplinary practices subtly shape expectations and behaviour, and in Bourdieu's (1990) notion of 'habitus', the typically unconscious incorporation of social tradition and norms into

ordinary human conduct. In both these accounts, actors are not atomistic individuals, but essentially parts of the social.

Second, practice theorists hold on to individuality by asserting another sense of practice: people's actual activity 'in practice'. In practice, social practices are followed in rough and ready ways, according to the exigencies of the situation. Thus, in his study of urban living, De Certeau (1984) insists on the importance of not just *what* is done, something that can be understood by counting, but also of *how* it is done, something requiring close anthropological attention. He studies activity in apartments, workplaces and shops, attentive to the detailed, idiosyncratic 'murmurings of the everyday' (De Certeau 1984: 70). For Bourdieu (1990) similarly, the challenge is to capture the 'practical sense' by which life is actually lived in the moment. This is something that external observers cannot simply read off from macroscopic accounts of society's structures and functions.

The distinction between practices and what happens 'in practice' points to a third core theme in the practice turn: the actors on whose skills and initiative activity depends. Like Bourdieu's (1990) card players, who may play the same hand differently according to their skill and the flow of the game, these actors are seen not as simple automata, but as artful interpreters of practices. For De Certeau (1984), people 'make do' in everyday life, negotiating the constraints handed down to them through a constant stream of tricks, stratagems and manoeuvres. Actors become important because their practical skill makes a difference. Indeed, actors may be creative agents: they are potentially reflexive enough, and their social systems open and plural enough, to free their activity from mindless reproduction of initial conditions (Giddens 1984; 1991). In their practice, actors may amend as well as reproduce the stock of practices on which they draw. For practice theory, people count.

These three themes of practice theory are also those of this paper: the practices of both organizations and their wider social fields; actual activity, which we will later term 'praxis'; and actors, where we shall focus specifically on strategy's practitioners. Practice theory does not leave these themes separate, however: they are interrelated parts of a whole (Giddens 1984). The practice instinct is to resist the choice between micro-detail and larger social forces. Foucault (1977) can link the minutiae of military uniforms and marching steps to a transformation of modern civilization and notions of the human self. Giddens (1984) is as happy drawing on the detailed ethnomethodological studies of Garfinkel and his followers as on theorists of social class and the state. Actors' particular activities cannot be detached from society, for the rules and resources it furnishes are essential to their action. Society is, in turn, itself produced by just this action. This interrelationship between activity and society will be a central part of the framework for strategy practice developed later in this paper.

Practice in Management Research

Management research is engaging increasingly with the practice turn, drawing on it in fields as wide as technology (Dougherty 1992, 2004; Orlikowski 2000),

learning at work (Brown and Duguid 1991; Wenger 1998; Nicolini et al. 2003), institutional change (Seo and Creed 2002), marketing (Holt 1995; Hirschman et al. 1999; Allen 2002) and accounting (Hopwood and Miller 1994; Ahrens and Chapman 2006). What this work shares is a commitment to understanding their various domains in terms of human activity. Some of it goes further, to offer models for understanding the interrelationships between the three central practice themes of people, activity and the wider society.

In consumer marketing, for instance, these interrelationships are demonstrated by Allen's (2002) study of student college choice, in which close observation of behaviour is combined with attention to the wider cultures in which it is set. Thus, at one low-status college's marketing event, working-class women are easily enlisted by free muffins and friendly greetings, because these meet their cultural predilections. Middle-class students, with different cultural expectations, ignore such blandishments and choose less friendly but higher-status colleges. The link between culture and choice is reciprocal. As Allen (2002) observes, the modest ambitions and limited training of the low-status college serve effectively to reproduce the meagre expectations of the working-class women that brought them there in the first place. In the technology domain, Orlikowski's (2000) study of Lotus Notes implementation shows a similar but less smooth linking of activity, people and wider context. The software was originally inspired by the collaborative ideology characteristic of North American universities in the 1970s. But how people actually work with Lotus Notes turns out to be very different from the original ideal, with many users deliberately ignoring sophisticated collaborative functions. Here, activity is informed by a contemporary culture of technological scepticism — epitomized by the technophobic Dilbert cartoon handed to Orlikowski by one of her research subjects and reproduced in her article. Software shortfalls, of course, simply reinforce the original technological scepticism.

The management disciplines are, therefore, showing increasingly close attention to what people actually do, whether in selecting colleges or implementing software. Moreover, they recognize that the seeming minutiae of this human activity — taking muffins or ignoring software functionality — are linked to and may reinforce wider social phenomena that lie far outside the organizational domain. The strategy discipline, too, is increasingly taking a practice perspective. A key argument here, however, is that strategy is not yet linking the intra- and extra-organizational in the kinds of ways that other management disciplines have already begun to do. This omission both limits explanation of particular episodes and constrains the broader research agenda.

The Practice Turn in Strategy Research

In a sense, examining the practice of strategy simply extends a long tradition of research closely examining managerial work (e.g. Mintzberg 1973; Stewart 1967; Whittington 2003). However, one tendency in this broader tradition has been an individualist focus on micro-level managerial activity and roles,

leaving larger social forces on one side in an under-theorized category of 'context' (Tsoukas 1994; Willmott 1997). The promise of recent theoretical initiatives in the strategy literature that do draw explicitly on practice theory (e.g. Hendry 2000; Jarzabkowski 2005; Tsoukas 1996) is to develop closer connections between what goes on deep inside organizations and broader phenomena outside.

There are emergent exceptions (e.g. Rouleau 2005), but so far practice-orientated research has tended to bifurcate between intra- and extra-organizational levels. To start with the extra-organizational level, there is a growing body of work on the influence of strategy practices on whole societies or sectors (e.g. Knights and Morgan 1991; Oakes et al. 1998; Whittington et al. 2003; Grandy and Mills 2004). For example, Knights and Morgan (1991) use Foucault to show how strategy emerged historically as a new and powerful managerial discourse in the mid-20th century, transforming managers as a social group from reactive administrators into active and accountable 'strategists'. Here, strategy discourse is not the idiosyncratic product of a particular corporate culture, but part of a major societal change, with effects extending far beyond single organizations. Another example is the exploration, by Oakes et al. (1998), of the wider implications for managers of the introduction of business planning practices into Canadian public museums, using Bourdieu. The apparently technical rationality of planning subtly undercuts traditional sources of cultural capital for managers throughout the sector, shifting the balance from educational to commercial logics. In both these cases, the emphasis is on strategy as a broad social phenomenon that changes what managers do, and their self-understanding, in fairly general terms.

Other practice-orientated studies have grappled more directly with intra-organizational strategy activity (e.g. Dougherty 1992; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Maitlis and Lawrence 2003; Samra-Fredricks 2003). For example, Dougherty (1992) draws on the practice lens of Brown and Duguid (1991) to examine closely how managers use activities such as focus groups and customer visits to produce what she calls 'visceralization' in innovation strategy. It is her own detailed focus on managers' activity that reveals how detail is critical for innovation too. Similarly, in their ethnography of a university, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) apply Bourdieu and Giddens to show how the minutiae of its committee cycles actually become a source of advantage in shaping and responding to strategic change. The mundane details of university committees have surprising significance.

In their own terms, these intra- and extra-organizational studies have achieved considerable insight. But tricks are being missed. Appreciation of wider contexts can help make intelligible many of the complex details revealed by intimate investigations. Reciprocally, close engagement can uncover the real ambiguity and fluidity of the broad strategy trends found in sectoral or societal analyses. Completing the practice turn involves looping the two levels more closely together.

The potential limits of an intra-organizational focus are illustrated by Maitlis and Lawrence's (2003) ethnography of the failed introduction of strategy practices into a British orchestra. The study is outstanding for its

depth of access, but sidelines the wider trend towards public sector commercialization that was going on outside (Ferlie 2002). Here, integrating the kind of extra-organizational insights offered by Oakes et al.'s (1998) study of the spread of business planning in the similar context of Canadian museums would add perspective to some of the surprises that Maitlis and Lawrence (2003) uncover. First, the wider trend towards commercialization would make intelligible the largely unproblematic acceptance of the new strategy discourse by members of the orchestra, despite its tension with traditional artistic values. Second, such a wider context would underline the failure of the orchestra's chief executive to make the new strategy practices work, even in a public sector environment where these were becoming dominant. Both musicians' acceptance and chief executive failure are better appreciated in the light of broader social forces.

At the same time, a closer focus on what managers actually do can illuminate surprising societal phenomena. For example, formal strategic planning has been under attack for many years (e.g. Hamel and Prahalad 1994; Pascale 1991), and empirical support for its performance benefits is highly ambivalent (Brews and Hunt 1999). Mintzberg (1994) famously pronounced strategic planning's 'fall'. Yet, strategic planning remains a highly pervasive phenomenon, practised by 81% of large corporations (Rigby 2001). What we know very little about, however, is the reality of this planning in practice. Here, Grant's (2003) study of contemporary planning in oil companies is exceptional, and suggests that, in this sector at least, strategic planning may no longer conform to the stereotype of its critics but has moved on to serve new functions such as coordination and communication. Grant's (2003) research indicates the potential for intra-organizational studies of what managers actually do, to explain larger, and puzzling, patterns of strategic activity. Here the intra-organizational illuminates the extra-organizational.

Integrating Strategy Practice

Studies focused either at one level or the other tend to leave a sense of incompletion. As in the orchestra, practitioners' successes or failures are not evaluated in broader contexts; as with strategic planning, persistent practices are judged as if unchanging. This section, therefore, draws on the wider practice turn to develop a more integrated framework for strategy practice research, one capable of drawing out the kinds of insights that Allen (2002) and Orlikowski (2000) have discovered in parallel disciplines. This framework will be metatheoretical, in the sense of providing an overarching structure that can link different theoretical units, and theories about them, into a coherent whole (Tsoukas 1994). The first subsection elaborates a basic vocabulary of strategy praxis, practices and practitioners, reflecting the three core themes of the practice perspective generally. The next subsection combines these three themes into an integrative framework that emphasizes their interrelationship.

Strategy Praxis, Practices and Practitioners

The three concepts of strategy praxis, practices and practitioners are developed here in order to provide a consistent vocabulary for themes that, while central to the practice tradition, are often expressed in different ways. Briefly, the distinction between praxis and practices follows Reckwitz's (2002: 249–251) interpretation of the dual sense of practice in social theory, both as something that guides activity and as activity itself. Accordingly, 'practices' will refer to shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting and using 'things', this last in the broadest sense. By contrast, the Greek word 'praxis' refers to actual activity, what people do in practice. Practitioners are strategy's actors, the strategists who both perform this activity and carry its practices. The alliteration of the three concepts is intended to reinforce the sense of mutual connection.

The three concepts need filling in. To start with strategy's prime movers, strategy practitioners are those who do the work of making, shaping and executing strategies. These are not just the senior executives for whom strategy is the core of their work (Grant and Spender 1996). Many others perform strategy work, often as part of a wider role or a stage in their careers (Grant 2003; Mantere 2005). Although a diminished profession, strategic planners still play a large role in strategy formation (Davids 1995). Middle managers also engage in strategy work, not just through implementation, but through middle-top-down processes of agenda seeking, proposal selection and information filtering (Dutton et al. 2001; Floyd and Lane 2000). Then there are the outside strategy advisers. Prominent here are the strategy consultants, such as McKinsey & Co. and the Boston Consulting Group (Kipping 1999; McKenna 2006), but there are often other advisers too, for example investment bankers, corporate lawyers and business school gurus (Clark 2004). All these can be seen as strategy's practitioners.

What these practitioners actually do is strategy praxis — all the various activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy. In this sense, strategy praxis is the intra-organizational work required for making strategy and getting it executed. Although this work is often very diffuse, a large part of it can be seen as taking place in more or less extended episodes or sequences of episodes (Hendry and Seidl 2003). Such episodes include board meetings, management retreats, consulting interventions, team briefings, presentations, projects, and simple talk (Mezias et al. 2001; Westley 1990). Thus, the domain of praxis is wide, embracing the routine and the non-routine, the formal and the informal, activities at the corporate centre and activities at the organizational periphery (Johnson and Huff 1997; Regnér 2003). Counted here is even the formal strategy work overtaken by emergence (Mintzberg and Waters 1985), for this work remains a resource-consuming activity and can have significant symbolic and social functions beyond its stated intent (Langley 1989). In short, the practice perspective takes seriously all the effortful and consequential activities involved in strategy work.

Finally, there are the strategy practices that practitioners typically draw on in their praxis. Although practice theory tends to emphasize the tacit and informal, reflecting its origins in the sociology of everyday life (Schatzki

et al. 2001), I shall include explicit practices as playing an important role in organizations governed by formal accountability. Strategy's practices are multilevel (Klein et al. 1999). At one level, practices might be organization-specific, embodied in the routines, operating procedures and cultures (Nelson and Winter 1982; Martin 2002) that shape local modes of strategizing. Jarzabkowski and Wilson's (2002) university committees are a case in point. But practice theory emphasizes the extra-organizational too — the practices deriving from the larger social fields or systems in which a particular organization is embedded. For example, there may be sectoral practices, such as the routines of environmental scanning defined by shared cognitive maps (Porac et al. 1995) or norms of appropriate strategic behaviour set by industry recipes (Spender 1989). At a still higher level, there are the strategy practices of whole societies. Societal practices, for instance, include norms of appropriate strategic scale, scope or structure that diffuse across nations and the world (Fligstein 1990; Djelic 1998); types of discourse that inform and legitimate ways of doing strategy (Barry and Elmes 1997; Maguire et al. 2004); and specific strategy techniques, at least to the extent that they come to define legitimate routines for strategizing, as for instance the procedures of Porterian analysis (Knights 1992; Jarzabkowski 2004).

An Integrative Framework for Strategy Practice

Practice-orientated studies do not need to combine all three elements of praxis, practices and practitioners at the same time. Giddens (1979) explicitly allows for 'methodological bracketing' of one or more elements. However, practice theory does assume interconnectedness and provides means for understanding this. The purpose here, then, is to propose a framework that can link together different subsets of the three core elements, according to the particular task in hand, while at the same time acknowledging their ultimate membership of an integrated whole.

Figure 1 joins praxis, practices and practitioners within an integrative framework of strategy practice. Following practice theory in general, practitioners are seen as the critical connection between intra-organizational praxis and the organizational and extra-organizational practices that they rely on in this praxis. Practitioners' reliance on these practices is not simply passive, however. Praxis is an artful and improvisatory performance. Moreover, following particularly Giddens's (1984; 1991) characterization of the contemporary world as marked by open social systems, plural practices and reflexive actors, practitioners also have the possibility of changing the ingredients of their praxis. By reflecting on experience, practitioners are able to adapt existing practices; by exploiting plurality, they are sometimes able to synthesize new practices; by taking advantage of openness, they may be able to introduce new practitioners and new practices altogether.

At the base of Figure 1, therefore, are the strategy practitioners (for convenience, just A–D), typically top managers and their advisers but potentially middle managers and others as well. Initially, three of these practitioners (A–C) are members of the same organization, represented by the lower

Figure 1.
Integrating Praxis,
Practices and
Practitioners
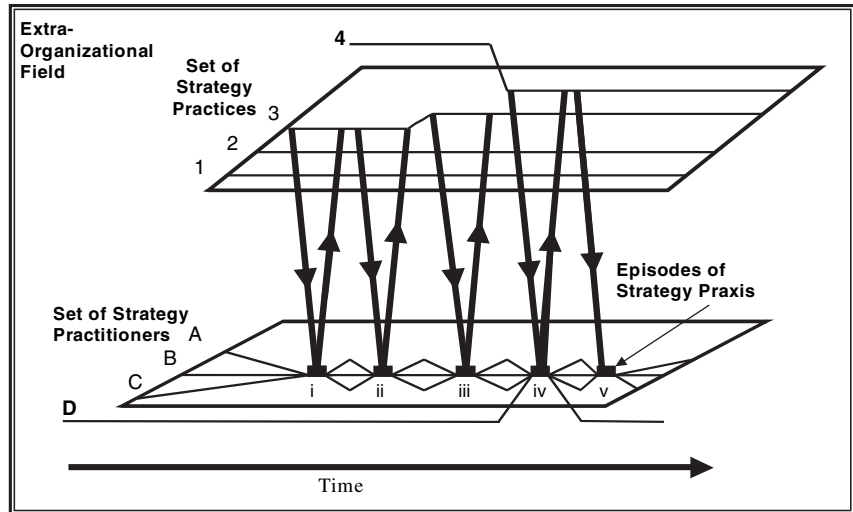
parallelogram. The fourth practitioner (D) is outside, part of the extra-organizational field, indicated by the larger, all-encompassing box. While these practitioners participate in many activities, Figure 1 highlights five points of convergence in episodes of intra-organizational strategy praxis (i–v). These praxis episodes might be formal board meetings; they might be informal conversations. As they strategize, practitioners draw upon the set of practices available from their organizational and extra-organizational contexts (for convenience again, just 1–4). Those practices that have become accepted as legitimate organizational practices for this particular organization are included within the upper parallelogram. These organizational practices will likely comprise both locally generated routines and practices originating from outside — such as standard strategy discourse — that have become thoroughly internalized. Practice 4 is representative initially of all those strategy practices that are presently outside the accepted practices of this particular organization, but are still within its extra-organizational field. None of these practices is fixed in its trajectory over time. As they draw on these practices, strategy practitioners reproduce, and occasionally amend, the stock available for their next episode of strategizing praxis.

Thus, Figure 1 insists both on the sequence of detailed praxis episodes deep inside the organization (represented by i–v) and on the potential influence of practices and practitioners available from outside (represented by practice 4 and practitioner D). To illustrate how Figure 1 can bring these elements together, let us focus on strategy practitioners A, B and C, perhaps a strategy project team. At the start, these practitioners' strategy praxis draws on shared practices 1–3, the established strategizing routines of their organization. For the most part, they are simply reinforcing these practices by continuing to rely upon them. However, occasionally and perhaps by improvisation or synthesis, they are able to adapt such practices, as they do with practice 3 in the second episode of praxis (ii), represented by the kink. Occasionally too, they might acccept from the world outside a new practice, as in the fourth

episode of praxis (iv) with the introduction of practice 4. In this case, the new practice is brought to the organization by an extra-organizational actor, practitioner D — perhaps a strategy consultant. Practice 4 is accepted as useful and legitimate, solidifying into a new recurrent practice among this set of practitioners, even though practitioner D does not participate directly in the following episode of praxis.

Figure 1 simplifies — the practitioners and practices are limited, while the ratio of innovation to continuity is high. Nonetheless, we can see how the overall framework can provide distinctive empirical insight, by rereading an episode quite similar to practitioner D's intervention in Figure 1, except that it ends in failure. Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) account of a failed 'strategy process workshop' in a publishing company is useful because its unusually frank and detailed account of strategy praxis from the inside allows a range of readings. The authors' purpose is to show the power of defensive psychodynamics: ' … confronting the social psychological reality of a cognitively disparate team faced with an uncertain future proved too stressful for the team members and their leader to bear' (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 974). Here, it is the incapacity of the client team that is the problem. The authors are persuasive in their own terms, but nonetheless the practice framework highlights other features of the episode that may also have contributed to failure.

Again, we can start with the strategy practitioners. Here the framework raises at least two issues. First, there is the group of senior managers involved in the workshop. Apart from the chief executive, these were not board members, yet it was repeatedly affirmed that it was the board that made the decisions in the organization (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 968–969). The workshop may have simply engaged the wrong practitioners. Second, and more complex, is the status of the two academic consultants leading the workshop, Hodgkinson and Wright themselves. They were intervening in an organization that was used to 'the assistance of several of the larger management consultancy/accounting firms' (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 958). Moreover, their original entrée had been through an academic seminar given by the first-named author. As two freelance academics in a professionalized environment, Hodgkinson and Wright started without the automatic recognition of a large consulting firm.

Further, the two academics' strategy practices did not fit easily with the established practices of their client. Hodgkinson and Wright's key technique was scenario analysis, which, as they explain, was developed in the context of large companies such as Royal Dutch Shell and validated by the unambiguously urgent threat of the 1970s oil crisis. Their client was a medium-sized publisher facing an indeterminate technological change, with consequences stretching out over perhaps 20 years (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 969). With a culture of 'quick-fire reactive decisions rather than strategic decisions' (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 971), the organization did not appear ready for the extended and presumably expensive process undertaken. Moreover, Hodgkinson and Wright followed a method of open inquiry and presentation of views that was consistent with norms of academic research, but highly

challenging in a context where 'a civil service culture' had prevailed and managers admitted to a lack of leadership capability within the top team (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002: 960; 969).

In terms of praxis, Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) account reveals both skill and perhaps some clumsiness. The chief executive emerges as a skilful operator, very aware of the power of apparent minutiae to undercut a process she no longer believes in. Thus she ridicules the rearrangement of furniture into an open configuration; she positions herself in the room so as to command attention; she hangs on to the marker-pen being used by one of the consultants to draw a key diagram. On the other hand, the two academics are not always so acute, for instance failing to square their findings with the chief executive before presenting them to her in front of her colleagues. This had damaging effects:

'the rich and highly diverse views, elicited through the personal interviews conducted prior to the group sessions, visibly shocked the various participants, especially the CEO. One of the participants went so far as to say that the effect on the CEO had been "the psychological equivalent of thrusting a medicine ball into her stomach".' (Hodgkinson and Wright 2002; 961–962)

Thus the framework highlights aspects of practitioners, practices and praxis that a psychodynamic account tends to pass over. Each element has significant repercussions in itself, but they are also intertwined. The framework links the character of the practitioners to their choice of practices and their skill in carrying them out. The consultants adhere to extra-organizational practices of open inquiry and presentation that are natural to academics but awkward to their subjects; as part-timers, their praxis is less than sure-footed, shocking their client and embarrassing her in front of colleagues. Certainly, Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) intriguing paper admits other interpretations. The psychodynamics were difficult, indeed. But what the integrated nature of Figure 1's framework adds is a sensitivity to each of the three elements and a sense of how they cohered to produce, in this instance, practical failure.

Implications of Integration for Strategy Practice

The previous section has shown how the framework of Figure 1 can help interpret particular episodes of strategy making, highlighting each of the elements of praxis, practices and practitioners while weaving them together. This section builds on this to develop four broader implications of this more integrated approach for the practice of strategy, and indicates areas of controversy or difficulty requiring further research.

Strategy Practices in Use

The first implication of the framework, signalled by the downward arrows of Figure 1, is the potential weight of practices on praxis. This warns of conservatism, as perhaps in Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) publishing organization. But it also points to the possibility of change, particularly as

generated by extra-organizational practices. As in the case of Figure 1's practice 4, many strategy practices are extra-organizational in their origins. Such practices can be widely influential, for example portfolio analysis and divisionalization. By the 1980s, 93% of large US corporations had division-alized (Fligstein 1990); 75% used some form of portfolio matrix (Haspeslagh 1982). Such practices can also be controversial. Hayes and Abernathy (1980) alleged that portfolio approaches promoted a detached, over-rational approach to strategy that was responsible for US economic decline. More recently, Ghemawat (2002) points to the rapid creation and diffusion of untested practices associated with 'new economy' thinking at the end of the 20th century, and their disastrous implications.

But the integrated approach does not suggest that practitioners will be the hapless puppets of such practices. Contrary to some institutionalist accounts (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell 1983), these practices are likely adapted in praxis, as represented by the kink created by episode ii in Figure 1. Thus, although Fligstein (1990) might chart broad trends towards divisionalization, closer investigation of actual praxis reveals frequent local modification of the multi-divisional form (Freeland 2000; Whittington and Mayer 2000). Mandated here, therefore, would be the kinds of intensive observation of practice use already developed by practice-orientated studies of technology (e.g. Orlikowski 2000), with strategy practices taking the place of equipment or software. At issue is how these practices are actually used. The claimed effects — for good or ill — of influential practices should not be accepted too easily, but interrogated closely on the ground. As Grant's (2003) study of contemporary strategic planning suggests, standard critiques from outside praxis risk perpetuating anachronistic assumptions.

The Creation of Strategy Practices

A second implication, as conveyed by Figure 1's upward arrows from episodes to practices, is that strategy practices are typically emergent from praxis. Again, this points to conservatism. Jarzabkowski and Wilson's (2002) longitudinal perspective shows how their university's committees developed from experience over a decade or more. However, given the potential power of some strategy practices to spread beyond particular organizations, and their controversial effects, a critical research issue becomes, How do such practices crystallize into something so influential?

In some accounts, influential practices originate almost by immaculate conception. Thus, Michael Porter (2002) describes his concept of 'generic strategies', defining a whole new set of analytical practices, as an 'eleventh hour', logic-driven addition to his famous book *Competitive Strategy*. In Tom Peters's (2001) account of the genesis of his *In Search of Excellence*, the eight famous principles ('stick-to-the-knitting', etc.) were distilled in an early-morning moment of inspiration alone at his office desk. However, an integrated-practice perspective would be sceptical of these accounts as general rules. Peters's co-author, Bob Waterman, gives more credit to praxis in the develop-ment of *In Search of Excellence*, emphasizing a lengthy process of interaction

with clients, audiences and colleagues (Colville et al. 1999). Similarly, the Boston Consulting Group's portfolio analysis practice emerged not from theory but from a seven-year development process involving the consulting firm and various clients (Morrison and Wensley 1991). Divisionalization as a practice emerged from long processes of experimentation and adaptation over the 1920s and 1930s by leading US corporations (Chandler 1962).

This uncertain understanding of the origins of influential practices suggests a second axis for research, focused on the development of new strategy practices. Here, existing practice research reinforces the value of an integrated perspective. As we explore the generation of new strategy practices, we can recall from earlier practice studies of innovation (e.g. Dougherty 1992) the importance of close engagement with practitioners' detailed activities and deep respect even for the minutiae of their praxis. An integrated perspective would predict, typically, a greater role for the hard labour of praxis in creating and diffusing influential practices than Porter or Peters appear to allow. There is substantial promise in understanding better the origins of strategy practices. On the one hand, consultants and gurus may become more effective producers of new strategy practices; on the other, responding to the concerns of Hayes and Abernathy (1980) and Ghemawat (2002), we may get better product testing before their launch on wider markets.

Practitioners as Carriers of Practices

A third implication of the framework, highlighted in Figure 1 by the role of practitioner D, is that practitioners — people — are central in reproducing, transferring and occasionally innovating strategy practices. Thus, the traditional white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (Wasp) establishment preserved cosy practices on Wall Street long after the Second World War, until entrepreneurial outsiders, such as Michael Milken and T. Boone Pickens, finally imposed the new strategy practice of hostile takeovers on 1980s corporate America (Stearns and Allen 1996). Similarly, after the opening of their first London office, McKinsey consultants defined a practice in the UK that became known as 'being McKinseyed', divisionalizing 22 of the country's top 100 corporations during the late 1960s (McKenna 2006). Here, practitioners matter as preservers, carriers and creators of strategy practices.

One implied research agenda here concerns the kinds of practitioners associated with the transfer of innovative practices. Historically, elites have often taken a leading role. Thus McKinsey relied on national business and social elites to make its entry into Europe (Kipping 1999), and business school elites were influential in divisionalization in the USA (Palmer et al. 1993). However, establishment elites can play a conservative role too, as in the case of US diversification in the 1960s (Palmer and Barber 2001) and takeover practices on Wall Street (Stearns and Allen 1996).

The influential role of certain practitioners poses some big issues for research. First, Ghemawat's (2002) concern about the rapid diffusion of untested practices raises questions about the density and independence of the practitioner networks through which new practices are currently spread.

Second, recalling the role of economic and political elites in adopting US strategy practices in the modernization of postwar Europe (Djelic 1998), the question now is how the elites of today's modernizing economies should, or should not, be enrolled as the carriers of new strategy practices (Peng 2003). There are already good models for researching these kinds of issues, for instance institutionalist studies of the role of inter-firm networks and personal mobility in transferring other kinds of management practices (e.g. Davis and Greve 1997; Kraatz and Moore 2002). There are also clear potential pay-offs, including the more effective marketing of new strategy practices for consulting firms, and better-calibrated diffusion of such practices in reforming economies.

Preparing Practitioners for Praxis

The final implication from Figure 1 is that effective praxis relies heavily on practitioners' capacity to access and deploy prevailing strategy practices. With Maitlis and Lawrence's (2003) orchestra, the chief executive was unable to access and apply effectively the new strategy practices then diffusing through the public sector (Ferlie 2002). Rather, as practitioners A, B and C had to wait on practitioner D, this chief executive had to rely upon a non-executive director with a consulting background to offer his board an introductory briefing on strategy, with a consequent loss of credibility. Even where strategy practices are more firmly entrenched, they still require skilled interpretation. Blackler et al. (2000) chronicle one strategy project group whose gauche over-reliance on the conventions of PowerPoint strategy presentation simply antagonized their senior management. Practitioners are crucial mediators between practices and praxis, and disconnection or ineptitude can profoundly disable strategy.

The research agenda here is to investigate how practitioners are prepared for entry into effective praxis. Middle managers typically struggle to be included in strategy (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Westley 1990). Indeed, the misfortune of Maitlis and Lawrence's (2003) orchestral chief suggests that, even at senior levels, effective participation cannot be assumed. Yet, as Liedtka (1998) indicates, we do not know much about how effective strategists are made. This is despite huge investments in business education, especially MBA degrees, in which strategic management is typically the central core (Pfeffer and Fong 2003; Pettigrew et al. 2001). If MBA sceptic Henry Mintzberg (2004) is right, this education industry is probably producing the wrong kind of strategists.

Given the investments involved, how strategy practitioners are best produced is an urgent research question. Here, existing research on communities of practice may offer a guide, even if usually directed to a different kind of skill set (Lave and Wenger 1992; Brown and Duguid 2001). Consistent with Figure 1, this perspective suggests that it is praxis that makes practitioners. Entering a community of practitioners — in the case of strategists, perhaps a board and its advisers — often involves a kind of apprenticeship, in which actors gradually learn to become full members of the group, absorbing its

particular mix of local rules and internalized standards. This view implies the need to track carefully the course of would-be strategy practitioners over time, following their praxis closely to observe how they master necessary strategy practices, relate to their peers and finally become accepted and influential members of their communities. The aim of such research would be to build better knowledge of what it takes to become a strategy practitioner in different kinds of context, particularly with a view to helping middle managers enter the challenging arena of strategy praxis.

Conclusions

The essential insight of the practice perspective is that strategy is more than just a property of organizations; it is something that people do, with stuff that comes from outside as well as within organizations, and with effects that permeate through whole societies. However, although strategy research is increasingly recognizing strategy as such a practice, researchers still tend to divide between those investigating praxis deep inside particular organizations and those tracking strategy's practitioners and their practices within society at large. There are pressing agendas to be pursued at each level: at the level of intra-organizational praxis, they directly concern the performance of the people we teach; at the extra-organizational level, they may touch on the performance of whole economies. But, in addressing each level largely in isolation, the strategy discipline takes incomplete advantage of the over-arching coherence implied by the practice turn, and falls short of what other management disciplines have already achieved. The persistence of practices such as strategic planning is hard to explain without tapping into praxis on the ground. Evaluating praxis within a particular organization requires an understanding of prevailing practices without.

Accordingly, this paper proposes a framework allowing a more integrated approach to strategy practice research. This framework sensitizes researchers intent on one element to interrelationships with other elements: intra-organizational praxis is marked by extra-organizational practices; successful practices are carried by influential practitioners; praxis forms practitioners. These kinds of interrelationships prompt research questions regarding the use of practices in the field, the development and diffusion of practices and the preparation of practitioners for strategy work. On all of these, there exist both considerable uncertainty and the potential for strong practical implications. Attention to actual praxis can inform the critique of influential and contested practices; understanding the relative roles of praxis and theoretical inspiration in creating new practices may promote strategy innovation; identifying influential practitioners and their networks can assist the marketing and transfer of appropriate practices; preparing practitioners better for entry into strategy praxis should help middle managers and others contribute more effectively to their organizations' strategizing.

These kinds of questions help define distinctive emphases for strategy practice research within the strategy discipline. The traditional concern for

strategy content and strategy process research has been firm or organizational performance, whether by better strategies or better processes (Barney 2002; Hoskisson et al. 1999). Strategy practice research embraces this concern: more effective strategy practitioners and more appropriate practices can contribute directly to organizational performance. However, the practice perspective does not confine itself to issues of organizational performance or advantage. The practice framework introduced here highlights aspects of praxis, practitioners and practices that go beyond a purely organizational agenda.

In the first place, there is the emphasis on praxis, the closely observed activity of strategy. Here, there is overlap with the process tradition, for example in Pettigrew's (1985) detailed account of the political manoeuvrings inside ICI. But, while many process studies focus on organizations and organizational populations as wholes (Garud and Van de Ven 2002), strategy practice research is more concerned to drill deep down inside the organization, to what Brown and Duguid (2000: 95) call 'the internal life of process'. Moreover, by contrast with the typical process concern for organizational outcomes — the strategic adaptation of a firm or groups of firms — a practice perspective may focus on the performance involved in the episode *tout court*. As both Maitlis's (2003) chief executive and Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) academic consultants found, praxis is a skilled but precarious performance. The practice perspective appreciates the quasi-theatrical quality of this performance, in which the proper playing of allotted roles ensures smooth progress, but the smallest slip can break the spell and bring everything crashing to a halt (De Certeau 1984; Goffman 1959). Bringing off a strategy away day or board-meeting is achievement enough, regardless of whether connections can ultimately be traced to organizational outcomes. The practice perspective finds plenty of significance in the bare performance of praxis.

This theatrical sense of performance carries over to the practice perspective's concern for practitioners. In Hodgkinson and Wright's (2002) study, the consultants and chief executive are variously skilled performers of their roles, more or less successful in achieving their own objectives. A practice perspective is concerned with who strategy's practitioners are, where they come from and how they are formed. The actors of strategy are not just members of organizations, but part of social groups — social elites or social outsiders, new professions such as consulting, or neglected strata such as middle managers — that need to be understood as part of a larger picture with implications going far beyond particular organizations. Seen in their widest sense, strategy's practitioners consume huge resources in society, in salaries and fees, while influencing the direction of the world's most powerful and economically important institutions (Ghemawat 2002; Mintzberg 2004). The changing nature of strategy practitioners, and the manner in which they are formed, is a matter for society as a whole.

The practice perspective is equally distinctive in emphasizing the extra-organizational character and significance of many strategy practices. Although many strategy practices are unique to organizations — specific planning routines, for example — many other strategy practices — such as away days or portfolio management — are common across organizations. From a practice

perspective, it is such common practices that become the units of analysis, and it is their performance, rather than that of particular organizations, that needs to be explained. Some practices, such as divizionalization, portfolio management or 'new economy' thinking, can sweep whole economies, with controversial effects (Ghemawat 2002; Whittington et al. 2003). Strategy practice research thus becomes urgently concerned with how such strategy practices are developed and disseminated, both inside and outside organizations. Tracing the origins, spread, legitimation and influence of strategy practices across populations of organizations is likely to draw more on institutionalist methodologies than conventional strategy content or strategy process approaches focused on organizational performance (Scott 2000).

The practice perspective, then, is distinctive in its emphases on both the intra-organizational and the extra-organizational. For strategy-as-practice researchers, praxis deep inside organizations, and practitioners and practices extending outside, are all prime units of analysis. Moreover, the central proposition of this paper is that the intra- and extra-organizational levels are linked. The practice perspective's broad appreciation of strategy as, in a sense, an industry extending beyond particular organizations, can complement the growing understanding of strategy as also a kind of work going on deep inside. Better understanding of strategy as a phenomenon at the extra-organizational level, including producers of dominant types of practices in consulting and business education, should help improve strategy praxis at the intra-organizational level. Better praxis should, in turn, help shape more appropriate practices and practitioners. Approaching strategy as something people do, therefore, adds an extra dimension to the discipline's traditional concern for endowing particular organizations with winning strategies or efficient processes. The overarching promise of this practice approach to strategy is a societal shift towards better everyday strategizing praxis, empowered by more effective practices and a deeper pool of skilled practitioners. It is worth completing strategy's practice turn.

References

Ahrens, T., and C. Chapman
2006   'Management accounting as process and practice'. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* (forthcoming).

Allen, D. E.
2002   'Towards a theory of consumer choice as sociohistorically shaped practical experience: The fits-like-a-glove (FLAG) framework'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 28/4: 515–532.

Balogun, J., and G. Johnson
2004   'Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking'. *Academy of Management Journal* 47/4: 523–549.

Barney, J.
2002   'Strategic management: From informed conversation to academic discipline'. *Academy of Management Executive* 16/2: 53–57.

Barry, D., and M. Elmes
1997   'Strategy retold: Toward a narrative view of strategic discourse'. *Academy of Management Review* 22/2: 429–453.

Blackler, F., N. Crump, and S. McDonald
2000   Organizing processes in complex activity networks'. *Organization* 7/2: 277–291.

Bourdieu, P.
1990   *The logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity.

Brews, P. J., and M. R. Hunt
1999   'Learning to plan and planning to learn: Resolving the planning school/learning debate'. *Strategic Management Journal* 20/10: 889–913.

Brown, J. S., and P. Duguid
1991   'Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Towards a unified view of working, learning and innovating'. *Organization Science* 2/1: 40–58.

Brown, J. S., and P. Duguid
2000   *The social life of information*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Brown, J. S., and P. Duguid
2001   'Knowledge and organization: A social-practice perspective'. *Organization Science* 12/2: 198–213.

Chandler, A. D.
1962   *Strategy and structure: Chapters in the history of American enterprise.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Clark, T.
2004   'Strategy viewed from a management fashion perspective'. *European Management Review* 1/1: 105–111.

Colville, I. D., R. H. Waterman, and K. E. Weick
1999   'Organizing and the search for excellence: Making sense of the times in theory and practice'. *Organization* 6/1: 129–149.

Davids, M.
1995   'Wanted: strategic planners'. *The Journal of Business Strategy* 16/3: 30–39.

Davis G., and H. Greve
1997   'Corporate elite networks and governance changes in the 1980s'. *American Journal of Sociology* 103/1: 1–37.

De Certeau, M.
1984   *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

DiMaggio P., and W. Powell
1983   'The iron cage revisited: Insitutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields'. *American Sociological Review* 48/2: 147–160.

Djelic, M.-L.
1998   *The export of the American model.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Dougherty, D.
1992   'A practice-centred model of organizational renewal through product innovation'. *Strategic Management Journal* 13, Summer Special Issue, 77–96.

Dougherty, D.
2004   'Organizing practices in services: Capturing practice based knowledge for innovation'. *Strategic Organization* 2/1: 35–64.

Dutton, J. E., S. J. Ashford, R. M. O'Neil, and K. A. Lawrence
2001   'Moves that matter: Issue selling and organizational change'. *Academy of Management Journal* 44/4: 716–736.

Ferlie, E.
2002   'Quasi-strategy: Strategic management in the contemporary public sector' in *Handbook of strategy and management.* A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, and R. Whittington (eds), 279–298. London: Sage.

Fligstein, N.
1990   *The transformation of corporate control.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Floyd, S. W., and P. Lane
2000   'Strategizing throughout the organization: Management role conflict and strategic renewal'. *Academy of Management Review* 25/1: 154–177.

Foucault, M.
1977   *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. London: Penguin.

Freeland, R. F.
2000   *The struggle for control of the modern corporation: Organizational change at General Motors 1924–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garud, R., and A. H. Van de Ven
2002 'Strategic change processes' in *Handbook of strategy and management*. A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, and R. Whittington (eds), 206–231. London: Sage.

Ghemawat, P.
2002 'Competition and business strategy in historical perspective'. *Business History Review* 76/1: 37–74.

Giddens, A.
1979 *Central problems of social theory*. London: Macmillan.

Giddens, A.
1984 *The constitution of society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Giddens, A.
1991 *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity.

Goffman, E.
1959 *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Allen Lane.

Grandy, G., and A. J. Mills
2004 'Strategy as simulacra? A radical reflexive look at the discipline and practice of strategy'. *Journal of Management Studies* 41/7: 1153–1170.

Grant, R. M.
2003 'Strategic planning in a turbulent environment: Evidence from the oil majors'. *Strategic Management Journal* 24/6: 491–517.

Grant R., and J-C. Spender
1996 'Knowledge and the firm: Overview'. *Strategic Management Journal*, 17, Winter Special Issue, 5–10.

Hambrick, D. C.
2004 'The disintegration of strategic management: It's time to consolidate our gains'. *Strategic Organization* 2/1: 91–98.

Hamel G., and C. K. Prahalad
1994 *Competing for the future*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Haspeslagh, P.
1982 'Portfolio planning: Uses and limits'. *Harvard Business Review*, January–February: 58–66.

Hayes, R. H., and W. Abernathy
1980 'Managing our way to economic decline'. *Harvard Business Review*, November–December: 67–75.

Hendry, J.
2000 'Strategic decision-making, discourse and strategy as social practice'. *Journal of Management Studies* 37/7: 955–977.

Hendry, J., and D. Seidl
2003 'The structure and significance of strategic episodes: Social systems theory and the routine practices of strategic change'. *Journal of Management Studies* 40/1: 175–196.

Hirschman, E. C., L. Scott, and W. B. Wells
1998 'A model of product discourse: Linking consumer practice to cultural texts'. *Journal of Advertising* 48/1: 33–50.

Hodgkinson, G. P., and G. Wright
2002 'Confronting strategic inertia in a top management team: Learning from failure'. *Organization Studies* 23/6: 949–978.

Holt, D. B.
1995 'How consumers consume: A typology of consumption practices'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 22/1: 1–16.

Hopwood, A. G., and P. Miller
1994 *Accounting as a social and institutional practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hoskisson, R. E., M. Hitt, W. P. Won, and D. Yiu
1999 'Theory and research in strategic management: Swings of a pendulum'. *Journal of Management* 23/3: 417–456.

Jarzabkowski, P.
2004 'Strategy as practice: Recursiveness, adaptation and practices-in-use'. *Organization Studies* 24/3: 489–520.

Jarzabkowski, P.
2005 *Strategy as practice: An activity-based approach*. London: Sage.

Jarzabkowski, P., and D. C. Wilson
2002	'Top teams and strategy in a UK university'. *Journal of Management Studies* 39/3: 355–382.

Johnson, G., and A. Huff
1997	'Everyday innovation/Everyday strategy' in *Strategic flexibility*. G. Hamel, C. K. Prahalad, H. Thomas, and D. O'Neal (eds). London: Wiley.

Johnson, G., L. Melin, and R. Whittington
2003	'Micro-strategy and strategizing towards an activity-based view'. *Journal of Management Studies* 40/1: 3–22.

Kipping, M.
1999	'American management consulting companies in western Europe: 1920 to 1990'. *Business History Review* 73/2: 190–220.

Klein K. J., H. Tosi, and A. A. Cannella
1999	'Multilevel theory building: Benefits, barriers and new developments'. *Academy of Management Review* 24/2: 243–248.

Knights, D.
1992	'Changing spaces: The disruptive impact of a new epistemological paradigm for the study of management'. *Academy of Management Review* 17/3: 514–536.

Knights, D., and G. Morgan
1991	'Corporate strategy, organizations and subjectivity: A critique'. *Organization Studies* 12/2: 251–273.

Kraatz, M. S., and J. E. Moore
2002	'Executive migration and institutional change'. *Academy of Management Journal* 45/1: 120–143.

Langley, A.
1989	'In search of rationality: The purposes behind the use of formal analysis in organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 34/4: 598–632.

Lave, J., and E. Wenger
1992	*Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liedtka, J. M.
1998	'Strategic thinking: Can it be taught?' *Long Range Planning* 31/1: 120–129.

McKenna, C. D.
2006	*The world's newest profession: Management consulting in the twentieth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maguire, S., C. Hardy, and T. B. Lawrence
2004	'Institutional entrepreneurship in emerging fields'. *Academy of Management Journal* 47/5: 657–679.

Maitlis, S., and T. B. Lawrence
2003	'Orchestral manoeuvres in the dark: Understanding failure in organizational strategizing'. *Journal of Management Studies* 40/1: 109–140.

Mantere, S.
2005	'Strategic practices as enablers and disablers of championing activity'. *Strategic Organization* 3/2: 157-184.

Martin, J.
2002	*Organizational culture: Mapping the terrain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mezias, J., P. Grinyer, and W. D. Guth
2001	'Changing collective cognition: A process model for strategic change'. *Long Range Planning* 34/1: 71–96.

Mintzberg, H.
1973	*The nature of managerial work*. New York: Harper & Row.

Mintzberg, H.
1994	*The rise and fall of strategic planning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Mintzberg, H.
2004	*Managers not MBAs*. London: FT Prentice Hall.

Mintzberg, H., and J. A. Waters
1985	'Of strategies, deliberate and emergent'. *Strategic Management Journal* 6/3: 257–267.

Morrison, A., and R. Wensley
1991 'Boxing up or boxed in? A short history of the Boston Consulting Group share/growth matrix'. *Journal of Marketing Management* 7/2: 105–130.

Nelson, R. R., and S. G. Winter
1982 *An evolutionary theory of economic change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nicolini, D., S. Gherardi, and D. Yanow
2003 *Knowing in organizations: A practice-based approach*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Oakes, L. S., B. Townley, and D. J. Cooper
1998 'Business planning as pedagogy: Language and control in a changing institutional field'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43/2: 257–292.

Orlikowski, W.
2000 'Using technology and constituting structures: A practice lens for studying technology in organizations'. *Organization Science* 12/4: 404–428.

Palmer, D., and B. B. Barber
2001 'Challengers, elites and owning families: A social class theory of corporate acquisitions in the 1960s'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46/1: 87–121.

Palmer, D., P. Devereaux-Jennings, and X. Zhou
1993 'Late adoptions of the multidivisional form by large US corporations: institutional, political and economic accounts'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28/1: 100–131.

Pascale, R.
1990 *Managing on the edge*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Peng, M. W.
2003 'Institutional transitions and strategic choices'. *Academy of Management Review* 28/2: 275–297.

Peters, T.
2001 'Tom Peters's true confessions'. *Fast Company* 53: 78–82.

Pettigrew, A. M.
1985 *The awakening giant: Continuity and change in ICI*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A. M., H. Thomas, and R. Whittington
2002 'Strategic management: The strengths and limitations of a field' in *The handbook of strategy and management*. A. M. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, and R. Whittington (eds), 3–30. London: Sage.

Pfeffer, J., and C. T. Fong
2002 'The end of business schools? Less success than meets the eye'. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 1/1: 78–85.

Porac, J., H. Thomas, F. Wilson, D. Paton, and A. Kanfer
1995 'Rivalry and the industry model of Scottish knitwear producers'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40/2: 203–227.

Porter, M.
2002 'An interview with Michael Porter', by Nicholas Argyres and Anita McGahan. *Academy of Management Executive* 16/2: 43–52.

Reckwitz, A.
2002 'Toward a theory of social practices: A development in cultural theorizing'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 5/2: 243–263.

Regnér, P.
2003 'Strategy creation in the periphery: Inductive versus deductive strategy making'. *Journal of Management Studies* 40/1: 57–82.

Rigby, D.
2001 'Management tools and techniques: A survey'. *California Management Review* 43/2: 139–151.

Rouleau, L.
2005 'Micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving: How middle managers interpret and sell change every day'. *Journal of Management Studies* 42/7: 1413–1442.

Samra-Fredericks, D.
2003 'Strategizing as lived experience and strategists' everyday efforts to shape strategic direction'. *Journal of Management Studies* 40/1: 141–174.

Schatzki, T. R.
2005   'The sites of organizations'.
       Organization Studies 26/3:
       465–484.

Schatzki, T. R., K. Knorr-Cetina, and
E. von Savigny *editors*
2001   *The practice turn in contemporary
       theory*. London: Routledge.

Scott, W. R.
2000   *Institutions and organizations*.
       London: Sage.

Seo, M.-G., and W. E. D. Creed
2002   'Institutional contradictions, praxis
       and institutional change:
       A dialectical perspective'.
       Academy of Management Review
       27/2: 222–247.

Spender, J.-C.
1989   *Industrial recipes*. Oxford:
       Blackwell.

Stearns, L., and K. Allen
1996   'Economic behavior in institutional
       environments: The corporate merger
       wave of the 1980s'. *American
       Sociological Review* 61: 699–718.

Stewart, R.
1967   *Managers and their jobs*. London:
       Pan.

Tsoukas, H.
1994   'What is management? An outline
       of a metatheory'. *British Journal of
       Management* 5/4: 289–301.

Tsoukas, H.
1996   'The firm as a distributed
       knowledge system: A
       constructionist approach'. *Strategic
       Management Journal* 17/S2: 11–26.

Wenger, E.
1998   *Communities of practice: learning,
       meaning and identity*. Cambridge:
       Cambridge University Press.

Westley, F. R.
1990   'Middle managers and strategy:
       Microdynamics of inclusion'.
       Strategic Management Journal
       11/5: 337–351.

Whittington, R.
2003   'The work of strategizing and
       organizing: For a practice
       perspective'. *Strategic Organization*
       1/1: 117–125.

Whittington, R., and M. Mayer
2000   *The European corporation:
       Strategy, structure and social
       science*. Oxford: Oxford University
       Press.

Whittington, R., P. Jarzabkowski, M.
Mayer, E. Mounoud, J. Nahapiet, and L.
Rouleau
2003   'Taking strategy seriously:
       Responsibility and reform for an
       important social practice'. *Journal
       of Management Inquiry* 12/4:
       396–409.

Willmott, H.
1997   'Rethinking management and
       managerial work: Capitalism,
       control and subjectivity'. *Human
       Relations* 50/11: 1329–1340.

**Richard
Whittington**

Richard Whittington is Professor of Strategic Management at the Saïd Business School, and Millman Fellow at New College, University of Oxford. His main research interest is in the practices of strategizing and organizing, and he currently chairs the Strategic Management Society's Practice of Strategy Interest Group. He has published in the *Journal of Management Studies, Organization Science, Organization Studies* and the *Strategic Management Journal*, and has produced or co-produced seven books, including most recently *The European Corporation* (Oxford University Press 2001), *The Handbook of Strategy and Management* (Sage 2002), *Innovative Forms of Organizing* (Sage 2003) and *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, 7th edition (Pearson 2004). *Address*: Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP, UK.
Email: Richard.Whittington@sbs.ox.ac.uk