

Relating microprocesses to macro-outcomes in qualitative strategy process and practice research

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Research Summary: A common challenge among qualitative Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice scholars concerns the need to link micro-level processes and practices to organizational-level outcomes in order to make their research more managerially relevant. In this methodological article, we explore and evaluate different ways of addressing this challenge. We draw on a corpus of qualitative process and practice studies to develop and illustrate three micro-macro linking strategies associated with these perspectives: correlation, progression, and instantiation. The strengths and weaknesses of the different linking strategies are discussed, and opportunities for complementarity, combination, and development are proposed. The article reveals the distinctive but complementary contributions of Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice strands of scholarship to understanding how microprocesses affect macro-outcomes.

Managerial Summary: Managers engage in a variety of strategic management processes and practices in order to develop and implement better strategies, achieve commitment to them from organization members, and ultimately improve organizational outcomes such as financial performance and competitive advantage. Qualitative research on these processes and practices is valuable because it can capture the detail and richness of strategic management as it is practiced in real organizations over time. Yet, it may not always be easy to see how this kind of research can derive useful knowledge about how these processes and practices actually affect outcomes. This article addresses this issue, identifying three methodological approaches (correlation; progression; instantiation) that can help scholars and managers understand these linkages, outlining their strengths and limitations.

KEY WORDS

microprocesses, organizational outcomes, qualitative research, Strategy Process, Strategy-as-Practice

1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite some distinctions, Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice scholars share a concern with a broadly similar empirical phenomenon: the “how” of strategy, whether expressed in terms of “formulation” and “implementation” as in the classic process school (Bourgeois, 1980; Chakravarthy & Doz, 1992; Van de Ven, 1992) or in terms of “activities” and “practices,” as proposed by practice scholars (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Whittington, 2007).

Moreover, many Strategy Process and Practice scholars also share a belief in the value of qualitative field research methods to capture processes and practices. For example, Chakravarthy and Doz (1992, p. 6) commented that key questions about Strategy Process “cannot be satisfactorily answered at arm’s length from the firm. The proverbial ‘black box,’ the firm, has to be opened and studied from within.” Many seminal contributors to the Strategy Process literature (e.g., Burgelman, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989a; Mintzberg, 1979; Pettigrew, 1990; Van de Ven, 1992) have adopted qualitative methods themselves and have also offered methodological insight into their use and potential. Similarly, several proponents of a Strategy-as-Practice perspective have also written about qualitative methods and favored them in their own research (Balogun, Huff, & Johnson, 2003; Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Lê, 2014; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007). The taste for and prevalence of qualitative research in this field is not justified only on the basis that theorizing is in its “early stages.” Rather, the phenomena studied (complex strategic management processes and practices at multiple levels spread out over time) appear to be particularly suitable in themselves for in-depth longitudinal or intense qualitative inquiry (Chakravarthy & Doz, 1992; Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012; Langley, 1999).

At the same time, there has been concern in some of the literature that Strategy Process and Practice research will remain only marginally valuable for scholars and practitioners if it cannot offer stronger insight into how lower-level processes and practices engaged in by individuals and groups connect to broader *organizational-level* processes and outcomes including strategy, organizational capabilities, and performance (Johnson et al., 2007; Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001; Szulanski, Porac, & Doz, 2005). Making these connections might appear all the more challenging for qualitative studies since small samples and idiosyncratic contexts can signal fragile claims and limited statistical generalizability (Szulanski et al., 2005), even though alternative criteria may be more appropriate in evaluating such studies (Tsoukas, 2009). Overall, the need to reach beyond description to link micro-level processes and practices with more macro-level outcomes is a common concern and a recognized challenge. For example, from a process perspective, Pettigrew et al. (2001) deplored the relative timidity of many process researchers in relating change processes to performance outcomes. And in a personal conclusion to a collective book on Strategy-as-Practice, Johnson wrote:

Like others interested in Strategy-as-Practice I believe that, if we are to understand the doing of strategy, we have to be prepared to engage with levels of analysis that take us into the micro aspects of strategizing (...) Pragmatically, however, we have to ask if

we are interested in seriously influencing and having an impact in the strategy field. If we do, we need to realize that such a level of analysis is foreign territory for most scholars of strategy, indeed of management. Their question will be, "So what?" (...) Unless such studies build explanatory linkages to outcomes at other levels, most obviously in terms of effects on strategy or strategy processes at the organizational level, they will be of limited influence. (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 214)

The present methodological article addresses this concern for linking micro-level processes and practices and macro-outcomes by describing, exemplifying, and assessing a set of three generic conceptual and methodological tools (called "linking strategies") through which qualitative process and practice scholars may make these linkages in their research designs and methods. In investigating this issue, we also show how the two founding traditions (Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice) may favor different kinds of linking strategies.

The article contributes by revealing the multiple ways through which qualitative researchers may methodologically link microprocesses and macro-outcomes, drawing particular attention to some less well-understood approaches (e.g., "progression" and "instantiation") that hold potential for advancing understanding and developing insights for practice. We assess the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches and propose ways that they might be successfully combined. The article further contributes by bringing together process and practice perspectives and illustrating their distinctions and overlaps, while suggesting some avenues for integration in the form of hybrid linking strategies.

Before discussing in detail the linking strategies, it is important to define our terms, notably the key notions of microprocesses, macro-outcomes, and the concepts of "process" and "practice." We define microprocesses here as *individual or collective processes and activities taking place at a lower level than organizational level*. These might include activities of individuals and of groups, such as framing (Kaplan, 2008), issue-selling (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), conversations (Rouleau, 2005; Westley, 1990), and other forms of interaction, as well as psychological processes such as managerial cognition (Eggers & Kaplan, 2013; Helfat & Peteraf, 2015; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000) and emotion (Huy, 2002, 2011).

The concept of "macro-level" is generally used in the literature to describe phenomena at the organization level and beyond to include the market and institutional environment (Salvato & Rerup, 2011). In this article, we narrow our attention specifically to the organizational level, and define macro-outcomes as *organization-level characteristics, processes, and behaviors*. These may include phenomena such as organizational capabilities and strategies at the organizational level of analysis. Organizational outcomes may also be related to the achievement of organizational goals such as strategic change, competitive advantage, and performance.¹

For this article, we also need to distinguish between the notions of "process" and "practice" associated with the "Strategy Process" and "Strategy-as-Practice" traditions. This is not entirely simple because the terms "process" and "practice" are used in at least two different ways: (a) to refer to different empirical phenomena and (b) to refer to distinct forms of theorizing.

The first way to distinguish between Strategy Process and Practice is in terms of the precise empirical object to which each refers. In most definitions, the notion of "process" implies a sequence of events, activities, and interactions over time related to a particular strategy-relevant

¹We recognize that Strategy-as-Practice scholars in particular have noted the embeddedness of strategic practices within a broader macro-level institutional environment and the multidirectional influences among levels (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). While in this article we restrict our attention to the linkages between microprocesses and organizational level outcomes, the ideas presented might potentially be extended to other levels beyond the firm.

issue (e.g., making a decision; formulating a plan; implementing a change). In contrast, the empirical concept of a “practice” is understood to be an “accepted way of doing things” that is “embodied and materially mediated,” and is “shared between actors and routinized over time” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 287). Thus, practices are patterns of activity that are reproduced and adapted recursively (Jarzabkowski, 2004). Moreover, strategy practices applied in a particular organization may be viewed as local manifestations of more broadly institutionalized forms (e.g., SWOT analyses, strategy workshops) existing beyond any particular setting.

Based on this, one can relate processes and practices empirically in at least two ways. First, long-term processes of strategy development over time may embed multiple practices or multiple enactments of the same practice (e.g., repeated management meetings). Second, particular practices can have distinctive processual structures (e.g., a particular instance of the practice of “strategic planning” can also be viewed as a process that plays out as a sequence of events). In other words, the empirical concepts are distinct, but highly interrelated. Mobilizing both concepts in a study is possible, though rare. We examine some examples later in the article.

A second way to distinguish “process” and “practice” is as labels for different forms of theorizing. For example, in the domain of Strategy Process, Van de Ven (1992) drew attention to a key conceptual distinction between *process theories* that explicitly consider temporal linkages among *events* over time (e.g., in the form of patterns of evolution and emergence) and *variance theories* that express relationships among *variables* (see also Mohr, 1982). In contrast, Strategy-as-Practice scholars have associated the perspective with the *practice turn* in social theory (Nicolini, 2012; Schatzki, 2001), implying a different set of theoretical and ontological assumptions. Typically, practice theories assume that situated action and social structures are mutually constituted, that knowledge is embedded in practical activity and that human and nonhuman agency are inseparable (Feldman & Orlitzk, 2011; Nicolini, 2012). Whittington (2007) further claims that Strategy-as-Practice scholarship differs from process perspectives by its “sociological eye,” implying an interest in how activities and practices “are embedded in broader societal or macro-institutional contexts” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012, p. 286).

In summary, the terms “process” and “practice” refer to different empirical phenomena and rather different theoretical resources. Qualitative Strategy Process research is generally focused on longer-term temporal evolution over time, while Strategy-as-Practice scholarship takes a more micro-level focus on specific activities and practices (e.g., discourse, meetings, tools, and artifacts). As we shall see, process and practice theories may also potentially suggest somewhat different constructions of the relationships between micro and macro phenomena. This brings us to a more detailed discussion of approaches for making these linkages.

2 | LINKING MICROPROCESSES AND MACRO-OUTCOMES IN PROCESS AND PRACTICE RESEARCH

Qualitative approaches hold a privileged place in both process and practice research. As mentioned, many process scholars consider this to be the best way to deepen understanding of strategy processes (Chakravarthy & Doz, 1992; Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1992). For practice scholars, qualitative methodology is dominant (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2015; Vaara & Whittington, 2012) and has indeed led to methodological innovations, including the use of video-ethnography (Gylfe, Franck, Lebaron, & Mantere, 2016), conversation analysis (Samra-Fredericks, 2003), and narrative approaches (Fenton & Langley, 2011). However, as mentioned earlier, the emphasis on

TABLE 1 Articles included in the review

Sources	Empirical qualitative research	Selected articles on micro-macro linkage
Process research		
Huff and Reger (1987): 1980–1986	10 articles	1 article
Rajagopalan et al. (1993): 1981–1992	5 additional articles	2 articles
Hutzschene reuter and Kleindienst (2006): 1993–2006	21 additional articles	1 articles
Review of leading scholars: 1980–2000 ^a	17 additional articles	8 articles
Review of leading journals from 2000 to 2015 ^b	32 additional articles	17 articles
TOTAL	85 articles	29 articles
Practice research		
Golsorkhi et al. (2015) 1990–2015	46 articles	15 articles
Vaara and Whittington's (2012) 1990–2012	34 additional articles	5 articles
Review of leading journals from 2000 to 2015 ^b	9 additional articles	3 articles
TOTAL	95 articles	23 articles
Combines process and practice research		
All process and SAP sources combined	5 articles	3 articles

^a Leading Process scholars: Bartunek, Bower, Burgelman, Doz, Eisenhardt, Gioia, Langley, Minzberg, Nutt; Van de Ven.

^b Leading journals: *Strategic Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of Management Studies*.

qualitative methods raises various challenges, one of which concerns how to link observed micro-level processes to outcomes at the organizational level.²

The present study therefore aims to provide a framework for understanding approaches to linking microprocesses to macro-outcomes in qualitative strategy research. To develop this framework, we examined qualitative studies mentioned in key review papers (e.g., Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Hutzschene reuter & Kleindienst, 2006), which provided a preliminary selection of articles. To this corpus, we added articles by leading scholars and published in leading journals between 2000 and 2015. Table 1 provides an overview of the review process, and online Appendix S1 offers a listing of all the articles considered. Our intent was not to exhaustively identify all qualitative process and practice research that developed some kind of micro-macro linkage, but to form a large enough sample to reflect the range of linking strategies adopted.

We eventually selected and analyzed a sample of 55 qualitative articles in which we clearly perceived an intention to link micro-level processes to macro-outcomes. Based on this sample, we identified the key ways through which both Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice scholars constructed these linkages. In the following section, we examine the different linking strategies, and explore their strengths and weaknesses. Note that our approach to describing and assessing linking strategies was partly inductive and partly informed by methodological and theoretical contributions

²Note that the body of work on “micro-foundations” (Felin & Foss, 2005; Felin, Foss, & Ployart, 2015) has parallels with this study, based on that perspective’s ambition to understand how micro-level phenomena aggregate to generate macro-level outcomes. Also, and interestingly, Felin et al. (2015, p. 613) raise concerns about the value of “standard, regression-based large N research methods” in micro-foundations research and note: “In the context of micro-foundational research, we believe that small N research indeed can play a powerful role.” Yet, they provide no examples of how this might be done. With its focus on qualitative research, the current article offers insight into this issue that may be useful for micro-foundations scholarship. Note however that a good deal of micro-foundations work tends to focus attention on individual psychological processes. The current article has a somewhat broader focus on activities and practices among individuals and groups in addition to psychological processes.

in the process and practice domains of research (Chia & MacKay, 2007; Langley, 1999; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Van de Ven, 1992).

3 | THREE LINKING STRATEGIES

A review of work that has attempted to elucidate the link between microprocesses and macro-outcomes in the qualitative Strategy Process and Practice literature allows us to identify three broadly different empirical strategies for capturing these relations that we call correlation, progression, and instantiation. We present these strategies below and illustrate them with exemplar process and practice studies. Studies were identified as “exemplars” when in our judgement, they offer particularly clear models for how the different strategies can be effectively implemented and communicated (Huff, 1999). For each strategy, we first identify the general idea behind it, and then present the implications for sampling, data requirements, and analytical approach. This is followed by illustrations and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses. Note that while each strategy involves a different methodological focus, it also implies the creation of different logical connections between micro and macro, these based on different assumptions about the nature of causal linkages and the ways in which they can be detected. The characteristics of the strategies and their strengths and weaknesses are summarized in Table 2.

3.1 | Correlation

We begin by describing the linking strategy that is perhaps most familiar to strategy scholars, even though it is not necessarily the one that, at first sight, appears to fit best with the theoretical forms of process and practice theorizing, at least when used alone. Nevertheless, key Strategy Process scholars, including Pettigrew (1990) and Eisenhardt (1989a), have been strong advocates of this approach, which is based, as we shall see, on a cross-case comparative logic.

3.1.1 | Linking logic and methodology

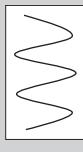
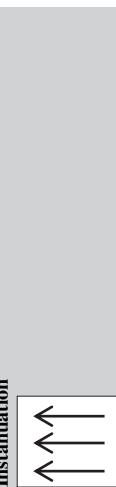
Although frequently drawing on process data, this strategy essentially involves discovering and identifying causal linkages between microprocesses and macro-outcomes through a variance-based logic where variation in macro-level outcomes is explained through variations in micro-level processes across comparative units of analysis. A classic inspiration for this approach is Eisenhardt's (1989b) study of how certain organizational practices and behaviors among top management teams (e.g., use of real time information, analyzing multiple alternatives simultaneously, two-tier advice processes, etc.) contribute to decision speed and organizational performance in high-velocity environments. The author offers a “midrange theory,” through which she shows clearly the association between the use of different micro-level processes influencing positively or negatively the macro-outcome (i.e., organizational performance).

In methodological terms, this linking strategy uses cross-sectional comparative reasoning to derive conclusions. Eisenhardt (1989a) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) have already offered extensive methodological advice for implementing it. For example, they recommend selecting from 4 to 12 cases with different macro-level outcomes, sometimes chosen deliberately to emphasize extremes (see also Pettigrew, 1990). Because outcomes generally need to be known in advance, research designs tend to draw largely on retrospective interviews, documentary evidence, and other data from multiple organizational informants in an attempt to detect differences in processes that might explain differences in outcomes.

TABLE 2 Strategies for linking microprocesses and macro-outcomes

Strategy	Correlation	Progression	Instantiation ^a
Origin	Process research	Process research	Practice research
Purpose	Finding multilevel and generalizable causal links, from micro to macro	Showing progressive and/or mutual influence between micro and macro over time	Showing how microprocesses accomplish macro outcomes
Form	Variance theory (linear, contingency)	Process theory (e.g., flow matrix, recursive model, outcome-driven)	Practice theory
Logic	Association	Contingency	Embeddedness
Mechanisms	Micro influences macro	Cross-sectional	Micro constitutes or performs macro
Approach	Influence	Mainly retrospective	Emergence
Sampling	Contingency	Sequence	Lamination
Data	Cross-sectional	Structuration	Synchronous
Early Inspiration	Multiple cases chosen for contrast in outcomes	Diachronic	Single or few cases in depth
Exemplar papers	Eisenhardt (1989a)	Real-time and retrospective	Mainly real time
	Gilbert (2005), (Martin and Eisenhardt 2010), and Nag and Gioia (2012))	Burgelman (1983) and Barley (1986)	Taylor and Van Every (1999)
Strengths	• Produces quantifiable propositions for testing	Crossan and Berdrow (2003), Jarzabkowski (2008), and Vuori and Hay (2016)	Samra-Fredericks (2003), Rouleau (2005), Komberger and Clegg (2011), and Kaplan (2011)
	• Suggests simple normative implications	• Recognizes temporality	• Reveals the significance of micro-level activities
	• May include causal chains	• Incorporates mutual and recursive influence	• Linkages directly visible
Weaknesses	• Linkages theorized, but not so visible	• Linkages multiple and directly visible	• Contextualized insights rather than abstractions
	• Compresses temporality	• Quantification harder (simulation may help)	• Narrow focus
	• Ignores mutual influence	• Overdetermination for outcome-driven genre	• Limited temporal view
Paths to generality	• Demands singular and static outcomes	• Normative implications more complex	• No simple normative implications (but focus on learning/reflexivity)
	• Analytical generalization based on abstraction	• Analytical generalization	• Transferability based on rich contextualization
	• Quantitative testing	• Transferability	
		• Simulation modeling	

^a This diagram shows bottom-up forms of instantiation as befits our emphasis on the influence of microprocesses on macro-outcomes in this article. However, Strategy-as-Practice research may also focus on top-down or mutual influences, notably including the institutional environment.



Progression

Correlation

Instantiation^a

Although this linking strategy is by no means absent from work claiming a Strategy-as-Practice inspiration (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd, & Bourque, 2010), it is clearly more common among process scholars (see Appendix S1). The lower interest from Strategy-as-Practice scholars may be partly because the correlational logic tends to involve relatively thinner retrospective data traces and a more positivist form of causal reasoning than are usually favored by this school. Specifically, multiple case comparisons require the abstracting away of situated contextual details to focus on general elements that can be easily compared across cases. In addition, a correlational logic also implies clear separability between explanans (micro) and explanandum (macro), something that is not always evident from a practice theoretical perspective, with its emphasis on mutual constitution (see earlier discussion).

3.1.2 | Illustrations

To illustrate and deepen understanding of this strategy, we review three exemplar articles. The first two deal with the influence of managers' cognitive processes on an organization's strategic behavior (Gilbert, 2005; Nag & Gioia, 2012). For example, based on case studies of eight newspapers facing the rise of digital media, Gilbert (2005) unravels the causal mechanisms that link threat perception and organizational inertia. His retrospective comparative analysis of the newspapers from 1994 to 2000 enabled him to identify two types of threat rigidity: rigidity associated with resource allocation, and that associated with existing routines. He showed that assigning resources to digital media was not enough, and that only in those firms that brought in outside advisors could structures and routines be radically redesigned. His analysis describes the chain of "intervening variables" that explain whether and how rigidities can be overcome. Gilbert's article, like others using this approach, contains six tabular displays comparing the eight cases according to key dimensions of the model as well as a chronological narrative.

The study by Nag and Gioia (2012) compares 22 small ventures in the foundry industry. Based on interviews with firm members and a grounded theory methodology, the article shows how "executive knowledge schemes" (top managers' beliefs about knowledge as a resource), and their scanning behaviors jointly contribute to explaining different uses of knowledge (for "adaptation" or "augmentation"), further predicting the degree to which firms are likely to be innovative. Although dealing with a larger sample than the previous case, the article again includes four detailed tables showing illustrative comparative data across the cases.

The final example shows the influence of micro-level processes occurring among managers on the performance of business unit collaborations (Martin & Eisenhardt, 2010). The authors gathered data from six publicly held software firms and compared two cross-business-unit collaborations in each, one that performed well and one that performed poorly, drawing on retrospective interview data at multiple levels. They offer a model in which they show two contrasting process pathways, one leading to success and one to failure. Successful collaborations were "BU centric." They originated in the business units, involved analytical learning activities prior to choices made locally, and they were implemented by dedicated teams. Unsuccessful ones were "corporate centric," originating with corporate executives, involving limited learning activities prior to imposition by headquarters, with implementation assigned in most cases to part-time team members. The article includes a total of 5 comparative data tables abstracting key dimensions of the collaboration process for the 12 cases of collaboration.

In sum, for this linking strategy, it is case comparison that enables the development of understanding about how microprocesses can make a difference to macro-outcomes.

3.1.3 | Strengths and weaknesses

On the positive side, the correlation approach to linking microprocesses to macro-outcomes tends to generate, because of its systematic comparative logic and variance theory form, formal propositions that, in principle, will be subsequently testable through large-scale quantitative research. For example, Eisenhardt's (1989b) propositions concerning the antecedents and consequences of fast decision-making were tested in survey research by Judge and Miller (1991). This feature of the correlation approach is appealing in the interests of constructing a cumulative body of nomothetic generalizations about strategy processes in the mode suggested by Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006).

Moreover, because this approach is concerned with comparing and understanding which microprocesses might lead to better or less good outcomes, studies using this strategy may seem to have more obvious normative implications than other strategies. For example, based on our illustrations, if we want to overcome routine rigidities, getting outside advice seems desirable (Gilbert, 2005), and if we want business unit collaborations to work, imposing them from above is apparently not the way to go (Martin & Eisenhardt, 2010).

Finally, the correlation strategy offers opportunity for novel insight if carried out well (and with a certain amount of luck!). A key difference between this strategy and quantitative variance research lies in the depth and open-endedness of the data that can be collected, enabling the discovery of inductively derived and unexpected chains of processual elements that it might have been impossible to guess at or to theorize *a priori*. Thus, the studies illustrated above do not stop at identifying correlations with single elements, but attempt to theorize explicitly the chains of intermediary mechanisms linking microprocesses to macro-outcomes. For example, Nag and Gioia (2012) elaborate complex pathways between manager's beliefs, firm behaviors, and firm outcomes. Both Gilbert (2005) and Martin and Eisenhardt (2010) also offer models that suggest parallel sequences of activities over time associated with positive and negative outcomes.

Nonetheless, sometimes the intermediary linkages identified are theorized more than actually demonstrated with data. In other words, the transparency of causal linkages can remain partial, despite observed empirical regularities. In her discussion of theorizing from case study research, Eisenhardt (1989a) insisted on the importance of asking "Why" whenever an empirical correlation had been discovered. The examples given here are systematic about attempting this. However, the causal chains developed are sometimes quite hypothetical. Other approaches may be needed to come closer to understanding more deeply the causal mechanisms in play.

Despite several positive qualities, from the perspective of Strategy Process and Practice scholarship, the correlational approach also has limitations. In particular, because it tends to generate variance models, it does not deal particularly well with temporal sequencing. It cannot capture or show complex types of process mechanisms such as mutual influence, dialectics, or ecological processes of variation, selection, and retention (Burgelman, 1991; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995) that might be inherent to longer-term strategy processes. Emerging models are also based on assumptions that outcomes are uniquely identifiable at distinct points in time (which may not always be justified), and that relationships between microprocesses and macro-outcomes are unidirectional, and static. The approach thus does not deal particularly well with notions of mutual constitution and structuration that may underpin practice perspectives.

In summary, this linking strategy has the advantage of encouraging the establishment of nomothetic predictions that may be tested in quantitative research, and used to form the basis of normative prescriptions. The linking strategy offers potential for novel insight, but attention to the temporal dimension remains one of its main weaknesses. Moreover, ideally the correlation strategy requires a

fairly large number of cases and high levels of abstraction because the constructs that form conclusions must be easily definable and comparable across cases. This can result in limited attention to the fine-grained examination of micro-interactions in individual cases. Nevertheless, the power of comparison should never be underestimated. As we shall see later, it may also play an important secondary role in concert with other strategies.

3.2 | Progression

The linking strategy that we label “progression” focuses specifically on temporal and sequential relations among phenomena and therefore fits very well with process theories and Strategy Process scholarship more particularly. As we shall see, it relies on a somewhat different conception of causality than the correlation linking logic, and has some distinct variants.

3.2.1 | Linking logic and methodology

This strategy focuses on *sequential relations* between micro- and macro-level phenomena over time. It thus involves process modeling and a logic of temporality. Implicit within this strategy is the assumption that microprocesses and macro-level phenomena are interconnected over time. The researcher’s task is therefore to trace diachronically the mechanisms of transformation through cycles of influence between microprocesses and macro-outcomes as they co-evolve. We saw a variety of ways of constructing such linkages among the studies we found in the literature (see also Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Three genres of analysis stand out as particularly interesting, although not necessarily exhaustive: we call these the “flow matrix,” “recursive structuration,” and the “outcome-driven narrative.”

An early exemplar of the “flow matrix” genre is represented by Burgelman’s (1983) study of the internal corporate venturing (ICV) process. This involves sequential and mutual influences between individual-level and corporate-level activities. The study provides evidence on “how the entrepreneurial activities of individuals combine to produce entrepreneurship at the level of the corporation, as well as how forces at the level of the corporation influence the entrepreneurial activities of these individuals” (Burgelman, 1983, p. 224). The link between micro-level processes and macro-outcomes is represented by the so-called B-B (Bower-Burgelman) model, a classic framework of the Strategy Process school that has also been adopted and used by others (Gilbert, 2006; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Noda & Bower, 1996). The model, usually presented in matrix form with flows occurring between different cells, offers a view of strategy processes as following a path through three hierarchical levels (lower, middle, and top management on the vertical dimension of the matrix) and four “processes” (represented on the horizontal dimension). These include two “core processes” (“definition” and “impetus”) and two “overlying processes” (“strategic context” and “structural context”) that condition the core processes but that may also be responsive to them.

Burgelman’s (1983) methodological approach involved following six internal ventures over time for a period of 15 months, and tracing their path across different levels and stages characterized by different managerial activities. Although Burgelman’s study was comparative and identified conditions and activities explaining whether or not specific ventures advanced to become part of the strategic context, the key contribution of the paper is clearly more in the realm of a process model than a variance model, that is, in the identification of the series of stages through which all ventures needed to pass to eventually become part of the strategy. Multiple cases serve here to replicate the overarching process pattern of the B-B flow matrix. Building on this and other studies, Burgelman (1991, 1996) later developed an ecological process model of interaction between autonomous

(bottom-up) strategic initiatives and induced (top-down) strategic direction that deepens theoretical understanding of strategy dynamics.

Another conceptual tool for operationalizing this linking strategy, which we call the “recursive structuration” genre, is inspired by Barley’s (1986) study of technology as an occasion for structuring, which was further specified by Barley and Tolbert (1997). The focus here is on the recursive link between micro-level activities and macro phenomena over time (see also Burgelman, 1988). Rather than representing micro–macro linkages as flows through a matrix, Barley and Tolbert use a saw-tooth diagrammatic representation showing the mutual interaction between action (micro-level) and institutional (macro-level) realms as horizontal parallel lines connected by vertical arrows downward (from macro to micro), and diagonal arrows upward (from micro to macro). This represents how myriad activities at the micro-level accumulate over time to provoke changes at the macro-level that then influence the micro-level further in an ongoing recursive process. Although Barley and Tolbert are institutional theorists rather than strategy scholars, their saw tooth–shaped model has obvious applications to strategy processes and practices. Indeed, many process studies that adopt a progression linking strategy incorporate cyclical or recursive temporal linkages, reminiscent of structuration processes (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; Jarzabkowski, 2008; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000).

Finally, a third genre identified in relation to the progression linking strategy is what we call the “outcome-driven narrative.” Strategy scholars have always been keenly interested in understanding strategic successes and failures of particular firms (Danneels, 2011; Vuori & Huy, 2016) or remarkable episodes of change and turnaround (Bartunek, 1984; Pettigrew, 1985). Studies that adopt this genre usually focus on a single case, and attempt to understand how a particular outcome emerged drawing on evidence and sources of explanation at the micro-level (e.g., activities, cognitions, visions, and mistakes of organizational leaders and groups). Given the specific outcome focus, one might alternatively call this the “who-done-it” genre. Historical forms of causal explanation expressing chains of events and their interaction are inherent to this genre. However, examples in the scholarly literature tend to be more parsimonious than a historian might recommend (Burgelman, 2011; Vaara & Lamberg, 2016), attempting to abstract out from detailed descriptions of what happened, toward more generic conceptualizations of central causal mechanisms that could have potential transferability to other situations.

Thus, studies drawing on the progression linking strategy may take a number of different forms. The flow matrix genre is likely to involve multiple cases, chosen to identify and illustrate different patterns of flow among micro- and macro-elements. The recursive structuration genre is compatible with real-time data offering the opportunity for fine-grained analysis of how micro-activities accumulate recursively to create macro-outcomes at moments of shift. The outcome driven genre is likely to be based on retrospective analysis using historical data and interviews. In all cases, however, longitudinal empirical data spread out over time is crucial. Analytically, researchers adopting a progression linking strategy will often decompose timelines into blocks or phases. In the flow-matrix genre, these phases may become boxes in the matrix. For the recursive structuration genre, the blocks are likely to be separated at points of discontinuity in macro-level features in order to capture successive micro–macro influence cycles. This involves a “temporal bracketing” analytic approach (Langley, 1999) in which successive temporal brackets or “phases” are not usually treated as stages in a deterministic progression, but rather as temporally bounded units of analysis that can be used to replicate emerging theoretical ideas.

3.2.2 | Illustrations

Besides the popular Bower-Burgelman model, Strategy Process and Practice scholars have developed other multilevel flow matrices or diagrams to articulate different kinds of links among micro-

and macro-levels. One example is Crossan, Lane, and White's (1999) 4I model of organizational learning. This is represented as a flow-matrix with multiple levels (individual, group, organizational) and has been applied to an analysis of organizational learning and strategic renewal at Canada Post (Crossan & Berdrow, 2003). In another example, Kaplan and Orlitzki (2013) developed a flow diagram framework to show how "temporal work" was carried out and integrated by managers in the process of developing strategic project investment decisions. As in Burgelman's matrix, this diagram allows the detailed mapping of a specific decision as it weaves back and forth iteratively through the boxes of the framework. These examples show the utility of the flow-matrix device in creating and representing sequential processes. Such frameworks do of course need to be supported by theoretical explanations.

The recursive structuration genre is best illustrated by Jarzabkowski's (2008) analysis of "strategy as a structuration process," which highlights different patterns of top management strategizing behavior, explicitly referencing Barley and Tolbert's (1997) model. Drawing on three cases studies of universities, the author uses the model to show how deliberate strategizing activities (micro-level actions) interact with previously institutionalized understandings of strategy (macro-level) over time. In particular, she shows how reshaping a strongly institutionalized strategy demands strategizing efforts that combine both interactive negotiations and administrative work to embed new strategic orientations in formal procedures.

Finally, an exemplar of the "outcome-driven narrative" genre is Vuori and Huy's (2016) study of "how Nokia lost the Smartphone battle." Drawing on retrospective data and interviews, the authors offer a model that describes the interplay between several microprocesses that lead over time to the failure of the company. In particular, they draw out the role of fear in strategy making. The model suggests that middle managers were terrorized by "top managers' history of aggression" and responded to requests for action and feedback by overpromising and hiding problems, while top managers, fearful of losing out to competitors, increased pressure on middle managers without knowing what was realistically possible. Fear and silence jointly contributed to a self-reinforcing dynamic that damaged the organizational adaptation process.

3.2.3 | Strengths and weaknesses

The main strength of the progression linking strategy is to articulate the temporal dimension of the micro-macro link, enabling researchers to capture the dynamic aspects of the relationship between microprocesses and macro-outcomes, something that is generally missing with the correlation strategy. Moreover, detailed process tracing and assessment of outcomes over time enables clarity and greater transparency in understanding the actual mechanisms by which linkages occur in both directions because these are based on detailed understanding of the precise *events* that enable the emergence and constitution of outcomes.

The "outcome-driven genre" of the progression strategy assumes that there is a definitive one-time outcome to be explained (similar to the correlation strategy), but the other genres offer more subtle understandings of "outcomes" and their relations with microprocesses. In discussing process studies, Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, and Van de Ven (2013, p. 10) note, "Certain processes, of course, do have final stopping points where distinct outcomes can be traced to particular processes. (...) However, a process perspective would generally view outcomes such as organizational performance measured at particular points in time as ephemeral way stations in the ongoing flow of activity." Thus, a progression linking strategy (especially the flow matrix and recursive genres) favors richer understandings of mutual relationships between levels over time because it refuses to artificially stop the clock. Time goes on, as does the interaction between individual and group activities

and practices generating effects at higher levels that then become the context within which new activities and practices occur.

Progression linking strategies do, however, generate conceptual models that are somewhat harder to quantify and test statistically, partly because of their event-based rather than variable-based structure, partly because of the inherent contextual detail, and partly because of the possibility of probabilistic temporal relations. Yet, there are opportunities for quantification. For example, Van de Ven and Poole (1990) showed how event sequences developed through qualitative research could be transformed into bitmaps that could then be statistically analyzed. Bontis, Crossan, and Hulland (2002) operationalized the 4I flow matrix model using survey data. Gavetti (2005) drew on Tripsas and Gavetti's (2000) study of managerial cognition and firm capabilities to develop an agent-based simulation that formalized the recursive relationships observed in the original qualitative study. Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, and Kuljanin (2013, p. 584) in fact argue that agent-based simulations are uniquely equipped to study the phenomenon of "emergence." However, most models developed through a progression strategy are not formulated in terms of linear variance propositions, but incorporate more complex relations that are difficult to formalize.

Partly because of this, some scholars express concern about the potential for generalization in this type of study. Generalization in qualitative research always relies on contributions to theory rather than on statistical regularities. However, we would also argue that longitudinal data that includes multiple comparable incidents over time offers stronger and more cumulative evidence than is usually understood. Moreover, many studies, including those by Burgelman (1983), consider more than one entity (i.e., six ICV projects), allowing replication of the findings not only over time but also across cases. However, the progression strategy is better adapted to literal replication (Yin, 2014) where cases are used to show similarity in processes across different settings rather than to explain differences.

A final concern with the progression linking strategy, and particularly with the "outcome-driven narrative" genre, relates to the question of how one can conclusively claim that a particular theorized narrative explains an outcome given the lack of a comparative case, propensity for hindsight bias, and the "over-determination" of historical events (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016). Durand and Vaara (2009) recommended systematic historical counterfactual analysis to partially overcome this difficulty (see also Burgelman, 2011). This implies systematic thought experiments that examine carefully what would have occurred if a proposed causal element had been different. Counterfactual analysis is not, however, always evident in published studies, although Burgelman (2011) indicated that it played some role in his historical analysis of Intel. A second approach famously illustrated by Allison's (1971) study of the Cuban Missile Crisis involves offering not a single explanatory narrative, but two, three, or more different ones, each based on different theoretical assumptions—what Langley (1999) refers to as an "alternate templates" approach. Though little observed in strategic management research (but see Sloan, 2006 for an exception), this enables the reader to assess the value of each explanation and provides a richer understanding of events than any single narrative on its own.

3.3 | Instantiation

Unlike the previous strategies, the instantiation linking strategy is more specifically associated with Strategy-as-Practice research, grounded as it is in the theoretical and methodological assumptions that often characterize this line of work (although Strategy-as-Practice scholars may employ other approaches as well).

3.3.1 | Linking logic and methodology

The logic behind this linking strategy is to show how microprocesses directly instantiate or constitute the macro-processes through which the organization exists or is changing (a logic of embeddedness; see Table 2). The relationship between microprocesses and macro-outcomes is implicit and virtually simultaneous. The strategy is thus grounded in practice-based theorizing in which practices are believed to be constitutive of the social world (Schatzki, 2001).

This strategy has been promoted by various scholars in the social sciences, but a classic contribution is Taylor and Van Every's (1999) work on "communication as constitutive of organization," which launched a school of thought in communication theory (Schoeneborn et al., 2014) and which itself draws on the work of ethno-methodologists (Boden, 1994), and on actor network theory (Latour, 1987). Using this perspective, Kuhn (2008) attempted to sketch a full-fledged communicative theory of the firm. More modestly, several Strategy-as-Practice scholars have adopted this approach in which specific events or series of events are examined in detail to show how individual behaviors in interaction contribute to constituting or "performing" strategy at the macro-level (e.g., Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Rouleau, 2005). Note how performance is expressed in terms of a verb rather than as an outcome in this mode of analysis, suggesting a shift from how micro-activities predict macro-outcomes (the correlation linking strategy) and from how micro-activities interact recursively with macro-level factors over time (progression), toward what it is that micro-activities actually accomplish. This is associated with the notion of "performativity" (Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016; Guérard, Langley, & Seidl, 2013), a complex concept with multiple definitions but whose origins lie in Austin's (1962) idea that in some circumstances, saying things directly accomplishes the thing that is said (as for example in the marriage ceremony—"I pronounce you man and wife").

In terms of methodology, this linking strategy usually requires in-depth ethnography and real time data to capture the interactions and evolution of micro-level phenomena and their synchronic embeddedness at different levels. Interviews are not always strongly favored here because the researcher may want to observe practices that individuals engage in, but whose form they themselves might be unaware of and unable to articulate (Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Rouleau, 2005). Indeed, practical knowledge and skills are believed to be fundamentally tacit. This generally leads researchers to focus on a single case in depth. Analysis is likely to involve what we call a "deep dive" approach to analysis, plunging into the data to illuminate specific incidents, illustrating the precise ways through which mundane practices contribute to constituting broader phenomena. Rouleau (2005) likens this approach to using a microscope to investigate specimens in biology. Ethnomethodological methods, conversation analysis, or other micro-analytical techniques may sometimes be mobilized in this effort. It is by layering or laminating (Samra-Fredericks, 2003) analyses of multiple seemingly small incidents illustrating similar patterns that their overall organizing effects can be seen.

3.3.2 | Illustrations

Rouleau's (2005) study of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving offers a first exemplar of this strategy. The author shows how within the context of ongoing routines and conversations, two middle managers at the interface with clients skillfully enact the organization's recently formulated strategy (i.e., bringing it into being in the moment) by adjusting their messages to their audience, drawing on cultural repertoires, channeling attention, and providing legitimate justifications. Indeed, Rouleau (see also Rouleau & Balogun, 2011) suggests that it is actually through such micro-level interactions by skilled individuals that the strategy of the firm as a whole is in fact instantiated and performed

(i.e., it is “implemented”). This study thus also illustrates the value and importance of Strategy Process and Practice research not just on how strategies are developed in the first instance but also how they come to be implemented or enacted. The skilled use of language and emotional expression in constituting key strategic outcomes among top management teams is also a feature of a number of other studies that use this linking strategy (Kwon, Clarke, & Wodak, 2014; Samra-Fredericks, 2003).

Another study that can be seen to adopt this linking strategy but that draws on a broader conception of strategic activities than the ones mentioned above is a paper by Kornberger and Clegg (2011), who investigate the strategic planning process of the city of Sydney. They title their paper “Strategy as Performative Practice” and suggest that the practices put in place by the city administrators and its consultants to develop this strategic plan (heavily based on consultations that were none the less organized to achieve certain intended outputs) actually came to constitute the boundaries of the city itself, creating it as a new strategic macro-actor (something that it was not before), and imbuing it with legitimate agency. They note, “The strategy process simultaneously constituted a community and made claim to represent the voice of that community. The consultation allowed the documents to point at the community as if they were the authors of the strategy; hence, the strategy’s authority and power were legitimized as the community’s will” (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011, p. 150). There is a critical note to this paper that illustrates the way in which community consultations were manipulated by administrators to achieve this result. However, the point is that these micro-level activities constituted and instantiated a more macro-level phenomenon with some longer-term effects, the community of Sydney, socially constructed as legitimate strategist with an agreed upon strategic direction.

A final exemplar of this strategy is represented by Kaplan’s (2011) ethnographic study of the use of PowerPoint in strategy making through more than 30 team meetings. Using deep dive vignettes into specific incidents replicated over multiple occasions, she showed how through its affordance of the discursive practices of collaboration and cartography, the use of PowerPoint constitutes the “epistemic culture of strategy making.” These ongoing practices, in other words, contribute to bringing organizational-level strategy into being: “This analysis demonstrates that strategy making is not only about analysis of industry structure, competitive positioning, or resources, as assumed in content-based strategy research, but it is also about the production and use of PowerPoint documents that shape these ideas” (Kaplan, 2011, p. 320).

3.3.3 | Strengths and weaknesses

One strength of this strategy is to promote a deep understanding of the significance of micro-level interactions that are often understudied or forgotten, and the way in which they can be consequential. The strategy shows how microprocesses and macro-outcomes can be simultaneously accomplished through the same micro-level actions. The mechanisms by which the connection happens is transparent and visible—something that may not be so clear in the correlation strategy, for example. Depending on the methodology, this strategy may or may not reveal temporality, however, because many applications of the approach are synchronic.

In the narrower time-bound examples (e.g., Rouleau, 2005; Samra-Fredericks, 2003), this approach does not develop a broader longer-term assessment of macro-level outcomes beyond the moment or period of the studied microprocesses, which can be seen as a limitation. Thus, although Rouleau’s (2005) middle managers enacted the organization’s strategy through their skilled behaviors, we do not see whether the overall strategy in a broader sense was in the end implemented throughout the organization. For this to occur, many parallel and interdependent microprocesses

might be needed, about which little is known. The approach adopted in that study only shows one contributive mechanism by which micro-level activity can constitute macro-level effects. Kornberger and Clegg's study goes further in capturing the layering of multiple practices that together constitute a macro-level outcome beyond a single moment. In addition, this linking strategy tends not to reveal explicit chains of causal relationships across multiple levels because this is not its purpose. A view of micro- and macro-relationships in terms of instantiation works precisely by bringing the two into close correspondence, not by pulling them apart.

One might also ask how this linking strategy would deal with concerns about generalizability. In this strategy, samples are small and highly specific—indeed, it is the rich detail expressed in deep-dive vignettes that enables micro-macro instantiation to be made visible. The detailed explanations provided may seem contextually bound, often even more so than for applications of the progression linking strategy. The answer here is that the value of these studies lies not in the specific linkages revealed, but in the understanding provided of the means and mechanisms through which they occur (Tsoukas, 2009), even though they will certainly manifest themselves differently in different situations. For example, Rouleau and Balogun's (2011) study of discursive competence among middle managers tells the stories of four different people who achieved influence on strategic change. However, it is the common features of what they accomplished (their contextualized knowledge of verbal and sociocultural contexts, and their specific conversational practices—differently manifested for each because of their specific context) that constitute the transferable theoretical insight. Indeed the notion of “transferability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) rather than “generalizability” seems more relevant to this kind of research. Transferability requires rather than eschews the presence of deep contextual detail to enable readers to judge for themselves the resonance of particular findings with other situations.

A final issue related to this strategy is how it might eventually be seen as “useful.” This strategy does not usually generate obvious and simple normative prescriptions, especially when studies focus on highly contextualized situations. Nevertheless, exposing managers to findings like those generated by the authors discussed here (Kaplan, 2011; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Samra-Fredericks, 2003), and encouraging them to think reflexively about their own practices offers clear potential for generative learning (Rouleau, 2005).

In addition, note that although we have considered this linking strategy specifically in the context of capturing bottom-up influence between microprocesses and macro-outcomes at the organizational level (as is the purpose of this article), a broader understanding of the notion of “instantiation” from a Strategy-as-Practice perspective could also encompass institutional levels and multidirectional influences (Seidl & Whittington, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

4 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we identified three ways of logically connecting microprocesses to macro-outcomes using qualitative methodologies. We were moved to explore this issue by the concern expressed in some of the literature that Strategy Process and Practice research might be deemed irrelevant if it could not link micro-processes to outcomes of interest to the firm (Johnson et al., 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001). While correlation and progression are the staple linking strategies for Strategy Process scholars, Strategy-as-Practice scholars introduced the instantiation strategy as a different way of considering the linkage between micro and macro. In this section, we further discuss the implications of these strategies in three ways. First, we underline their mutual complementarity. Second, we consider ways in which the strategies might be combined. Third, we consider the implications of our

analysis for the development of further dialogues and intersections among Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice scholars.

4.1 | Toward a complementary view

As shown, each linking strategy has some strengths and weaknesses (see Table 2). Separately, they offer a different kind of understanding of the link between microprocesses and macro-outcomes, and can be seen as complementary. The purpose of comparison is not to conclude which is “better” or “worse,” but to review the types of knowledge that they generate.

By using the correlation strategy, scholars essentially assume that causal linkages between microprocesses and macro phenomena can be developed and generalized across multiple settings. They aim to specify these generalities, and use them to prescribe effective managerial behaviors (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). So does this imply that the correlation strategy necessarily offers more useful knowledge? We question that assumption. Nomothetic relationships developed through this linking strategy may abstract out critical contextual elements, compress temporal ordering, and neglect the possibility of mutual constitution and recursion that are important to how outcomes emerge (Langley, 1999). While correlation may seem to provide instrumental knowledge about “what works,” progression is better at revealing the chains of events involved. Finally, the instantiation linking strategy reveals the significance of micro-level actions and interactions by focusing on what it is precisely that they accomplish. The usefulness here lies in enabling managers and others to be more reflexive about their actions.

It is important to note, however, that the three linking strategies are based on somewhat different paradigms or understandings of the world. For example, the correlation strategy is grounded in a postpositivist paradigm. For some proponents of that paradigm, it almost seems as if only variance-type thinking is of value. For example, Carlson and Hatfield (2004) define progress in the strategic management field as composed of two dimensions (level of prediction in terms of variance in outcomes explained and degree of generalizability). Process researchers who favor a progression strategy can also sometime be rather insistent about the unique value of processual forms of explanation. Finally, some proponents of practice-theory (frequently associated with an instantiation strategy) resist the notion of a clear distinction between micro- and macro-levels (Chia & MacKay, 2007). Thus, assessments of the different linking strategies are likely in some cases to be personal, and to depend on one’s own epistemological and ontological beliefs. Moreover, combining them can raise challenges as we now discuss.

4.2 | Combining the linking strategies

An important question is whether there is value in combining the linking strategies. Some of the barriers to doing so are paradigmatic, as discussed above. The postpositivist assumptions associated with the correlation strategy do not necessarily fit together with the more social constructivist assumptions favored by researchers adopting progression or the practice-based assumptions of the instantiation approach. Mohr (1982) argued that mixing variance and process theoretical models (i.e., as expressed by the correlation and progression approaches) is not desirable as the mixture may tend to confuse rather than clarify. Other barriers are related to the data required to implement different strategies, which may be different, ranging from interviews, to historical studies to fine-grained ethnography. Finally, the space required to combine different approaches in the context of a regular journal article is another limitation. Yet, we think that in theory and practice, there could be some advantages. Hybrid strategies have the potential to enrich qualitative research on micro-macro

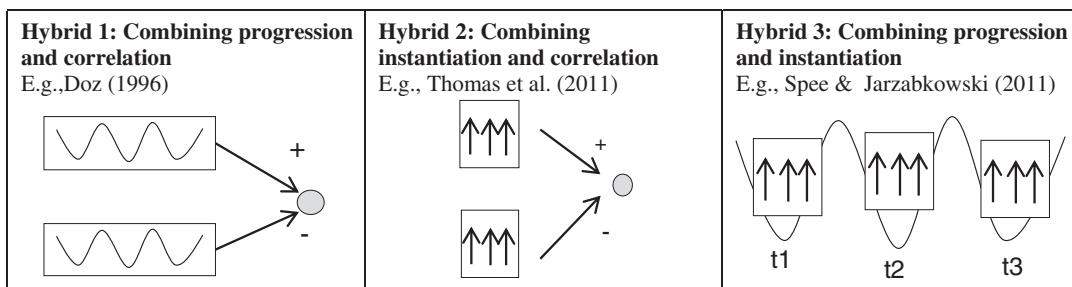


FIGURE 1 Hybridizing the linking strategies: Three hybrid forms

linkages, and capitalize on the strength and mitigate weakness related to each linking strategy used alone. We suggest three forms of combination that seem more plausible and feasible, and provide some exemplars of each (see also Figure 1).

Hybrid strategy 1 refers to the combination of a progression strategy and a correlation strategy. This consists of demonstrating a correlational relationship between microprocesses and macro-outcome drawing on comparative longitudinal case studies whose process dynamics are also reflected in the analysis. This is, in fact, a fairly common form of hybrid in which the temporal logic is combined with the associative logic. Concretely this means studying at least two cases with mixed results (e.g., success vs. failure), identifying sequences of events and activities relating to each case; and showing the mechanisms that explain differences in result. An example is provided by Doz's (1996) study of the evolution of cooperation in strategic alliances. Using a longitudinal design he compared successful and failed alliance projects in order to identify how conditions and learning process are related over time to these outcomes. His focus was on "the question of 'what changed over time, and why'" (p. 59) and comparison between cases help to develop two linear process models, one explaining the success and the other failure. Such a strategy is difficult to implement because of the significant work required (e.g., detailed longitudinal study of several cases). However, in doing so, one can contribute both nomothetic predictions and also elucidate the temporality underlying multilevel explanations.

Hybrid strategy 2 involves nesting instantiation in a correlation strategy. The use of this strategy requires a study in real time of micro-practices, and comparison of situations that produced opposite results. This has the advantage of showing how practices may instantiate outcomes differently when they play out in different ways. Thomas, Sargent, and Hardy (2011) used this combination to demonstrate how organizational change occurs in every day interactions. They study in real time and in detail a workshop aimed at cultural change led by top managers. Using two deep-dive conversational vignettes, the analysis shows how the way in which communications occurred between protagonists instantiated a "breakthrough" in one case and a "stand-off" in the other, the difference related to the way in which specific communication practices emerged interactively over time (dia logically in one case, and defensively in the other). Thus this hybrid strategy not only showed how communication instantiated certain outcomes, but at the same time how those outcomes differed in different situations, potentially leading to some formal predictions supported by the rich detail of the specific interactions.

The last strategy, *hybrid strategy 3*, combines progression and instantiation. This considers different practices over successive periods and analyzes how they instantiate emerging outcomes over time. An exemplar is Spee and Jarzabkowski's (2011) study of the construction of a strategic plan as a communicative process. They carried out a real-time study over 12 months that they divided into five periods. A fine-grained analysis of meetings for each of these periods allows the authors to

propose a recursive process model of the link between talk and the creation of a strategic plan. What is interesting here is that the study shows how the strategic plan emerges through interaction over each period, and how it is then recontextualized and reshaped in the following period. The difference between this and research that uses a purer form of progression strategy is the level of detail of micro-interaction and the fact that the relationship between the micro and the macro is constructed as one of mutual constitution, and not simply influence between separate but related elements. This example suggests that combining instantiation and progression strategies is feasible and can enrich theorization of the micro-macro link in Strategy-as-Practice research by paying closer attention to temporality. Indeed, Whittington (2017) has underlined the need to consider temporality more seriously in the study of strategy practices. This hybrid strategy appears to be a way to achieve this and in the process to more closely relate process theorizing with Strategy-as-Practice research.

4.3 | Dialogues and intersections

We indicated at the outset that the Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice perspectives can be construed differently depending on whether one focuses on the empirical phenomenon (a process or a practice), or on theory (variance, process or practice theory). As we saw, process scholarship is more closely associated with correlation and progression and practice scholarship more closely (though not exclusively) with instantiation. However, the discussion above suggests that process and practice can and do intersect in other ways. Intersection is perhaps most obvious at the empirical level, since practices are often descriptively embedded in processes without there necessarily being any reference to practice theory. For example, Burgelman's (1983, 1988) studies of internal corporate venturing implicitly include activities and practices (such as championing) as part of a process. The connections can become richer, however, when theoretical dimensions of practice are also integrated into the analysis. For example, Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) extended the Bower-Burgelman model to examine how emergent strategic initiatives became integrated into organizational strategy. They found that this integration was instantiated through discursive practices involving PowerPoint slides that traveled through different levels of management meetings to finally appear in decks presented to the top management team.

Similarly, practice scholars may draw on longitudinal data, but do not necessarily associate themselves with process theorizing explicitly. However, when Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011) study "strategic planning as a communicative process" (their term) using a Strategy-as-Practice frame, when Kaplan and Orlitzky (2013) examine temporal work using a practice perspective to look at project development processes, the intersection is strong and obvious. There are clearly multiple opportunities to develop this relationship, and opportunities at the same time to mobilize multiple linking strategies between micro-processes and outcomes that can enhance the value of these mutually overlapping schools of thought.

In conclusion, both Strategy Process scholars and Strategy-as-Practice scholars have been concerned at various times that the approaches they proposed would not be perceived as legitimate if they did not favor linkages to outcomes. Implicitly this may have been driven by a concern to favor more traditional ways of linking to macro-outcomes (e.g., those associated with correlation). While not setting aside opportunities to use this strategy, we suggest that both process and practice scholars need to emphasize and celebrate the value of the alternate modes of linking that their specific theoretical perspectives allow. Temporally sophisticated analyses that show the mutual recursive relationships among micro-processes and outcomes as well rich detailed studies of activities and practices that show how they accomplish higher-level organizational phenomena can add considerable depth to our understanding of strategy.

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