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# AFFECT AND STRATEGY PRACTICES

## Introduction

Strategy-as-Practice (SAP) has become an invaluable part of the Practice Turn (Brown, Collins, and Duguid, 1989; Dougherty, 1992; Orlikowski, 1992, 2000; Orr, 1996; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, and Von Savigny, 2001), with influences from a wide range of social science fields (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), including the Process School of Strategy (Whittington, 1996), for instance Burgelman, (1983, 1988, 1991), Pettigrew (1977), and Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976). Although SAP has greatly alleviated the fundamental problem of neglecting human aspects of strategy making and strategy implementation by explicitly accounting for how organizational members actually perform activities (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl, 2007; Pettigrew, Thomas, and Whittington, 2002; Weick, 1979), we argue that the affective life of practitioners has yet to be assigned importance in explaining strategy work (strategizing) and the formation, reproduction and change of practices. Indeed, SAP researchers acknowledge this weakness (Golsorkhi *et al.*, 2010; Johnson *et al.*, 2007), and Schatzki (2005) argues that emotions are part of teleoaffective structures of practices alongside rules and knowing. Practices are embedded in the mental space of strategy practitioners (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Whittington, 2006), and since modern neurophysiological methods have revealed that “cold” thinking and affect are both a type of cognition using largely the same neural paths (Duncan and Barrett, 2007; Lindquist and Barrett, 2012), then practices are also (per definition) an ingrained part of affect. Additionally, affect is a language by itself communicating without words (Schwarz, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 1983, 2007), and it therefore deserves its place alongside other types of discourses that are essential for explaining strategizing. Further, affect communicates faster than other forms of cognition, for instance its primary influence in guiding attention (Pourtois,

Schettino, and Vuilleumier, 2013; Vuilleumier, 2005), which finally confines perception and conceptual thinking that reinforce or amend practices through social interaction and affective sharing.

In this conceptual paper we extend the SAP literature by suggesting three main mechanisms that explain how affect (e.g., emotion, mood, or feeling) legitimizes or amends strategy practices. We suggest a framework explaining the interaction between affect and practices through the individual phenomena of affect-as-information, affect-induced cognitive processing, and affective knowledge, as well as through the interpersonal mechanisms of discursive construction and affective sharing. The phenomenon affective knowledge is new for the purpose of this paper, and defined appropriately.

We make two contributions. First, we present a framework showing how affect functions to legitimize or amend practices through social interaction and affective sharing. Second, we define affective concepts (affect, emotion, mood, and feeling) in order for SAP researchers to extend our framework further, and for strategy researchers in general to widen their affective repertoire beyond emotions.

Even though our conceptualization of affect is psychological, its foundation and functioning towards forming practices are well based on psychophysiology. The progress in neuroimaging and neuroscientific methods are now replacing the view of the human brain as a computer system that has been dominating since the cognitive revolution replaced behaviorism (Phelps, 2006). It is becoming clear that the extant division between affect as an irrational disturbance and cognition as the rational counterpart does no longer hold (Brosch *et al.*, 2013; Duncan and Barrett, 2007; LeDoux, 2000a; Phelps, 2006; Pourtois *et al.*, 2013). Affect (emotion, mood, or feeling) is generated by a large brain network that overlaps with higher mental processing (Deco, Jirsa, and McIntosh, 2011; LeDoux, 2012, 2000b; Wager *et al.*, 2008a), which contradicts with the traditional view of a more primitive limbic system

solely being responsible for affect (Cohen, 2005; LeDoux, 2000a; MacLean, 1952; Phelps, Lempert, and Sokol-Hessner, 2014). The implication is that various forms of affect (emotion, mood, or feeling) will influence strategizing and practice formation since affect is a form of cognition. More importantly, affect has the ability to markedly alter strategizing and ultimately practices since affect often transfers fast and unaware through designated early neural pathways in the brain (Armony and Dolan, 2002; Pourtois *et al.*, 2006, 2013; Wager *et al.*, 2008c), or by efficiently organizing brain networks in response to stimuli (Lindquist *et al.*, 2012a; Sabatinelli *et al.*, 2013; Vuilleumier, 2005; Vuilleumier *et al.*, 2011). For instance, stimuli-driven information from the occipital areas to the temporal lobe (including amygdala) transfers efficiently through white-matter fibers (Catani *et al.*, 2003; Pourtois *et al.*, 2013).

In relation to our first contribution, we rely partly on the discursive-based approach of strategy, which is about how strategy practitioners use language and communication to gain and maintain conceptualizations of strategy, together with representations of the psychological, physical and social context in which the strategy is situated (Balogun *et al.*, 2014; Fenton and Langley, 2011; Hardy and Thomas, 2014; Knights and Morgan, 1991; Küpers, Mantere, and Statler, 2013; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Mantere, 2013; Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005; Seidl, 2007; Suominen and Mantere, 2010; Vaara, 2010; Vaara, Kleymann, and Seristö, 2004; Vaara and Pedersen, 2013). Discursive practices take place in interaction among practitioners, between practitioners and external actors, as well as internally as a mental exercise. This process is enacted by affective sharing, which is a primary mechanism for socialization (Elfenbein, 2007). The sharing of a deliberate and conscious affect can occur when either the “sender” or the “receiver” uses recognized techniques such as (the following concepts are explained later in this paper): emotion recognition (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Kelly and Barsade, 2001); affective contagion (Barsade, 2002; Doherty, 1998; Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson, 1994;

Visser *et al.*, 2013); vicarious affect (Bandura, 1986; Kelly and Barsade, 2001); behavioural entrainment and interactional synchrony (Chartrand and Bargh, 1999; Condon and Ogston, 1967; Dabbs Jr, 1969; Leander, Chartrand, and Wood, 2011; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1987); empathy (Zaki, 2014); and audience-tuning (Echterhoff, Kopietz, and Higgins, 2013).

This paper will proceed by first defining affect in relation to other affect-related concepts. Second, we explain the three main individual-based concepts in our framework: affect-as-information; affect-induced cognitive processing; and affective knowledge. Third, we present our framework of affect-induced formation of strategy practices. Finally, we end the paper with concluding remarks.

## **Defining Affect**

The core explanatory concept of this paper is affect. We therefore begin to define affect. This could be easy or difficult dependent on which literature that is considered. Neuroscientists and medical professionals usually take a pragmatic view (e.g., Banks *et al.*, 2007; Canli *et al.*, 2001; Carmona, Holland, and Harrison, 2009; Davidson and Irwin, 1999; Etkin and Wager, 2007; Ruby and Decety, 2004; Vogt, 2005; Wager *et al.*, 2008b; Van Wingen *et al.*, 2011), while psychologists and organizational theorists tend to be polarized on what affect consists of, and its structure (Russell and Barrett, 1999; Watson and Clark, 1992). Researchers belonging to the literatures neuroscience, neuroimaging, neuroanatomy or neurocircuitry to mention a few, often see affect as similar to the everyday use of the label (LeDoux, 2000a). Affect is in these medical-related literatures usually termed emotion. In the psychology and management literatures affect is often acknowledged as a superordinate concept incorporating the concepts of feeling, emotion, and mood (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Forgas, 2000; Van Kleef, De Dreu, and Manstead, 2006; Schwarz and Clore, 2007). Scholars have yet to agree how to define and classify these affective concepts (Buck, 1990; Lang and Bradley, 2010; Scherer, 1987), and because of this affect lacks a widely accepted foundation since underlying

theories are not definite (Murphy and Zajonc, 1993). In fact, Buck (1990) described the work towards reaching a common definition of emotion and mood as a “conceptual and definitional chaos” (p. 330).

There is still a shared understanding among researchers how to broadly characterize these affective states. Feeling is commonly understood as the conscious and subjective experience of emotions (Frijda, 2007; Johnston, 2003; Moors, 2009; Ortony and Clore, 1989; Zajonc, 1980). Mood is generally seen as an affective state that is global and diffuse (free floating), likely to be outside awareness, and not connected to any single object (Barsade and Gibson, 2007). Emotion is the most complex of these affective concepts. A much used conceptualization of emotion is as an object-specific intense affective state which is short-lived (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Brief and Weiss, 2002; Davis, 2009; James, Brodersen, and Eisenberg, 2004). The definition of emotion and mood as applied above is largely opposites on three parameters – object; intensity; and duration. Emotion is directed towards something specific (e.g., a person you are disappointed with), while mood is a free-floating background state. Emotion is commonly understood as an intense psychological and physiological affective state, while mood is diffuse. Lastly, the duration of emotion is seen as short-lived and mood more persistent up to even a few weeks. There is disagreement about this temporal aspect – Frijda (2007) argues that emotions can last for a sustained amount of time if reappraised, and Phelps *et al.* (2014) see it as dependent on the particular emotion and the intensity of the inducing situation.

The definitions of feeling, mood and emotion depicted above are overly simplistic relative to the ongoing discussions within the related literatures in psychology. Although it will not serve this paper to delve further into this complexity, especially since definitional debates often do not yield productive developments (Leventhal and Scherer, 1987), one conundrum in the affect literature is worth mentioning in the following section.

### *The Endogeneity Conundrum*

We term the phrase “endogeneity conundrum” reflecting that researchers attempt to define and characterize various affective states relative to other affective states. This yields a simultaneity issue – changing the meaning of one affective concept changes the meaning of related affective concepts. Researchers interpret each of these various affective states differently, which means that the relative-definition endeavor leads to even more variations in definitions. What follows is a scattered field of perspectives of what affect is, which uphold the polarizations among affect researchers. We give a few examples of this endogeneity problem below.

Affect seems rarely to be used as an anchor for defining feeling, but affect more often uses feeling as a reference for its own conceptualization. An example of the former is Kuppens (2010): “...experienced feelings directly reflect the experienced pattern of appraised meaning, and the associated core affect, motivational and autonomous changes it implies” (p. 157). Examples of affect using feeling as an anchor are: “...affect is seen here in terms of the subjective experience of feelings and desires...” (Buck, 1990: 303); “...we defined affect as a feeling state as opposed to quality or valence assigned to an entity” (Brehm, Miron, and Miller, 2009: 1070); “...positive and negative affect...are rather general and non-specific ways to conceptualize emotional feelings” (Burgdorf and Panksepp, 2006: 174); “...affect, by which I mean the experience of valence, a subjective sense of positivity or negativity from an experience...” (Carver, 2003: 63). This means that affect in many instances is seen as a feeling state, in other words the subjective and conscious experience of emotions (Frijda, 2007), in a way a felt cognition (Izard, 2010). Although feelings are most often interpreted as a conscious affective process (Fredrickson, 2001; Frijda, 2007; Johnston, 2003; Moors, 2009; Rolls, 2000), in other words, an affective state with informational effects available in



awareness (Schwarz and Clore, 2007), some researchers interpret feelings as having more primitive and pre-awareness characteristics (Bechara *et al.*, 1995; Izard, 2002). Irrespective of this awareness debate, feeling and other affective states (and especially mood) contain information (Bermond, 2008; Clore, Schwarz, and Conway, 1994; Kuppens, 2010; Scherer, 2009; Schwarz, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 1983; Wyer and Carlston, 1979), which we see as a fundament of our new concept of affective knowledge conceptualized below.

Besides viewing affect as feeling, affect is sometimes equalized with emotion (Davidson, 1998; Feldman Barrett, 2011; Murphy, Nimmo-Smith, and Lawrence, 2003), mood (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Isen, 1987), and both emotion and mood at the same time (Forgas, 1995; Van Kleef *et al.*, n.d.; Schwarz and Clore, 2007). The latter is more likely to occur when affect is more of a superordinate concept. Be aware that the neuroanatomy and related literatures use the term emotion rather than feeling and mood, which means that these sources are not directly comparable to how psychologist and management researchers categorize the meaning of emotion.

For the purposes of this paper, we circumvent the endogeneity issue by treating affect as a superordinate concept, meaning that it can refer to mood, emotion and feeling alike. This is a realistic assumption since these three affective concepts are interrelated. For instance, Frijda (2007) argues that mood provides the background state that is always part of determining emotional intensity. Additionally, emotions are able to diffuse into moods (Brief and Weiss, 2002; James *et al.*, 2004; Madjar, Oldham, and Pratt, 2002; Schwarz, 1990). This makes moods and emotions part of a continuous affective process, where one begins and the other ends potentially difficult to conceptualize and measure (Davis, 2009).

Viewing affect as a superordinate concept, it has a strong influence on the formation of strategy practices since it conveys information that supersedes other forms of information such as written documents (explained below). This is an application of the affect-as-

information perspective (Gasper and Zawadzki, 2013; Schwarz, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 1983; Wyer and Carlston, 1979), which is the main explanatory concept in our affect-induced practice framework. In the next section, we define affect as information, and two associated mediators: affect-induced cognition and affective knowledge. The framework is presented immediately after defining and explaining these three core concepts.

## **Affect and Affective Knowledge**

In this section, we describe the phenomena of affect-as-information and affect-induced cognitive processing, as well as conceptualizing our new concept of affective knowledge. These elements do all have a central function in our framework (presented below), alongside the mediators of social interaction and affective sharing to carry affective influences up to the practice level.

### *Affect as Information*

Affect as information is a concept from the late 1970s (Schwarz and Clore, 1983; Wyer and Carlston, 1979). This view holds that affect (e.g., mood or emotion) contains information by itself (Gasper and Clore, 2002; Gasper and Zawadzki, 2013; Schwarz, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 2003). A positive feeling signals that everything is fine, while a negative feeling indicates a threat. The information from affect becomes more specific by the attributed object. In this way affect contains information about the current situation, and this leads to more positive (negative) judgment about what is momentarily on one's mind when in a positive (negative) affective state. Schwarz and Clore (1983, 1988) termed this the misattribution effect, meaning that the original cause of a feeling does not matter for the current judgment as long as the individual is not aware of (currently thinking about) the initial object or situation inducing the feeling. In other words, we have a tendency to judge the person, object, context,

or situation that we are currently thinking about based on how we feel at the moment as if the person, object, context, or situation caused the feeling. Misattribution has also been argued to occur for physiological arousal (Zillmann, 1978). For both cases – cognition and arousal – misattribution is an inferential process (Schwarz, 2012), and this activity of identifying the most likely cause of the current feeling will therefore vary even for similar situations over time. Further, an argument is that negative moods lead with more ease towards misattribution than positive moods (Abele, 1985; Bless, 2002; Bohner *et al.*, 1988). A likely reason for this is that negative mood demands more explanation since one feels threatened by the current situation (Wyer and Carlston, 1979), or that people most of the time are in a mildly positive affective state (Matlin and Stang, 1978), and by that sense they have a greater urge to find an explanation.

Frijda (2007) described mood as low ongoing readiness to be emotional, and people are always in a state of mood with varying degrees of positivity and negativity. Since mood is a diffuse and ambiguous affective background state (Brief and Weiss, 2002), it is especially susceptible for misattribution (Gasper and Clore, 1998). This is in contrast to emotion, which is inherently linked to a cause (e.g., a person or situation) and therefore more difficult to misattribute (Clore and Gasper, 2000; Dunn and Schweitzer, 2005). In this case, a positive emotion strengthens the current beliefs and thoughts about the cause, while a negative emotion questions these beliefs. One can say that feeling is believing (Brown, 2014; Clore and Gasper, 2000), but the difference is that moods compared to emotions may induce unintentional effects in situations not related to the mood. It should be noted that emotions have the potential of diffusing into moods after the eliciting situation has passed (Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 1987), and moods may trigger certain emotions (Frijda, 2007). In this way emotions still have the potential of leading to misattribution.

Additionally, Clore and Gasper (2000) argued for the processing principle. According

to this principle mood acts as a success or failure feedback. Positive mood is experienced as a success feedback, which strengthens the person's existing beliefs seen as relevant to the task. Negative mood is experienced as a failure feedback leading the person to feel that existing beliefs seen as relevant are inadequate, which further creates the need for new information.

### *Affect-Induced Cognitive Processing*

Cognitive processing is associated with the affect-as-information view. Schwarz (1990) and Schwarz and Bless (1991) argued that affect not only gives information, it also prepares the brain to meet the requirements that positive and negative affective states seemingly represent. When feeling positive compared to negative, people can afford to be less detail oriented and systematic in their thinking, since there is no threat to prepare for or solve. This is in line with findings that sad participants engage more with message elaboration than happy participants (Bless *et al.*, 1990; Schwarz, Bless, and Bohner, 1991). Bless (1994) termed this the "mood-and-general-knowledge" assumption, meaning that when people have information that the situation is benign or safe (i.e., when in positive moods and emotions), they will be confident that relying on general knowledge structures (top-down processing) will serve them well (Bless *et al.*, 1996). However, when the situation is seen as threatening or dangerous (i.e., when in negative moods and emotions), people are more insecure about existing knowledge structures and increasingly attend to details (bottom-up processing).

Top-down processing is often equated with heuristic processing (Ruder and Bless, 2003). Nisbett and Ross (1980) defined heuristic processing as the use of general knowledge structures such as scripts and schemas. Explaining the "mood-and-general-knowledge perspective" is traditionally polarized by four accounts (Bless *et al.*, 1996): confidence in knowledge structures (Bless, 1994); the affect-as-information view (Schwarz and Clore, 1983, 1988); cognitive processing deficit when in positive compared to negative mood (Isen, 1987;

Mackie and Worth, 1989); and the desire to maintain positive affect (the mood-maintenance perspective; Wegener and Petty, 1994; Wegener, Petty, and Smith, 1995). Whereas Bless *et al.* (1996) argued that people in positive moods apply a heuristic processing style because they have more confidence in pre-existing general knowledge structures, Isen (1987) argued that people in positive moods rely on heuristic processing because they are overwhelmed with primed information (cognitive overload). People have more positive than negative memories (Walker, Vogl, and Thompson, 1997), and since memory nodes are interconnected partly based on affective valence, positive affect primes more memory content than negative affect. This is an extension of the spreading activation theory by Collins and Loftus (1975). In the mood-maintenance perspective (Wegener and Petty, 1994; Wegener *et al.*, 1995), the argument is that people more often engage in systematic and bottom-up processing if the likely outcome is to enhance or maintain the current mood. When in positive compared to negative mood, it is more unlikely to improve the current mood, and therefore not seen as urgent to activate more analytic cognitive processing.

A foundation for affect-induced processing is mood-congruent priming. Bower (1981) argued that emotions can influence associative processing, elaboration, inference making, and judgment through two effects: (1) mood-congruity; and (2) state-dependent memory. Mood-congruity (mood-congruent recall) means that people attend more to, and learn more about, events and situations that match their current affective state. In other words, mood-congruity occurs when concepts have certain affective qualities attached to them (Blaney, 1986). State-dependent memory means that something is better remembered when people are put back in the emotional state they had when learning about it. Both effects are based on semantic-network theory (Bower, 1981), originally developed by Quillian (1962, 1967) as the spreading activation theory. This theory argues that semantic concepts in memory are connected with other semantic concepts in a network based on their similarity in conceptual relatedness

(Collins and Loftus, 1975). For instance, the sky, water, cold skin, and emergency lights all may share the common property of having the color blue, but they are not automatically linked to each other since they do not have many defining properties in common. "Priming" means here the activation of a node or unit of information by another (cf. Niedenthal and Setterlund, 1997; Passer and Smith, 2004). Niedenthal and Setterlund (1994) argued that mood is not discrete enough for mood-congruent recall to occur. That is, while mood is a diffuse affective state that is often measured by valence (Watson and Clark, 1994; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988; Watson and Tellegen, 1985), emotions are discrete and object-related by definition and therefore better able to enhance the accessibility of specific memories (Gendolla, 2000). However, Ekman and Scherer (1984) argued that mood also can appear in discrete forms (e.g., irritation and apprehension). In addition, Oatley and Johnson-Laird (1987) suggested that emotions can diffuse into moods after the eliciting cause has passed. Although not argued by Oatley and Johnson-Laird, such transfer from emotions to moods might increase the likelihood that these types of moods are of a more discrete character rather than purely free floating affective states.

### *Affective Knowledge*

We define affective knowledge as knowledge where affect extensively reduces causal ambiguity. In uncertain situations, we argue that affect may take on the role to reduce this uncertainty by recalculating "cold" mental probabilities of what we know to date relevant to the current issue, as well as concerning possible actions for improving the situation. In this case, the primary role of affect is to increase the confidence for relevant knowledge by reducing the felt uncertainty. This can lead to worse or better practices and strategic actions in relation to the current strategic situation, since the role of affect is not to solve the situation, but to enhance the sense of being closer to an ontological reality.

Note that all knowledge is affective to a certain extent (Bower, 1981), but for affective knowledge, affect is strong enough to extensively alter the mental probability calculations away from “cold” thinking. Cognition is information processing, which is about transforming information into something meaningful (Moors, 2007). Since we know that affect is intertwined with cognition (Duncan and Barrett, 2007), affect is therefore involved in transferring information into practice and knowledge. Knowledge conversion – i.e., the transfer of experience from one individual or organizational unit to another (Argote and Ingram, 2000) – is a main mechanism creating practices on the individual level as well as upwards to the organizational level through social interaction among organizational members (Miron-Spektor, Gino, and Argote, 2011; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Peltokorpi, 2006; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). More specifically, knowledge spirals from the individual to the organizational level by transferring knowledge forth and back between tacit and explicit knowledge and by synthesizing other contradictions within the firm such as creativity and efficiency (Nonaka and Toyama, 2002, 2003), until it is materialized in the organization’s routines, culture, identities, and artefacts (Nonaka and Peltokorpi, 2006), and therefore becomes a practice.

Affective knowledge is not the same as beliefs, which are propositions considered to be true (Frijda and Mesquita, 2000), where the meaning of the proposition is represented, coded and symbolized as a fact (Gilbert, 1991), as if it was declarative knowledge. It is reason to believe that this process is to a large extent nonconscious (Bargh and Chartrand, 1999; Greenwald and Banaji, 1995), while we believe affective knowledge to be the result of a stronger conscious effort to reduce uncertainty. Both affective knowledge and beliefs are driven by the information inherently embedded in affect (cf. Frijda, 2007; Mercer, 2010).

The usual conceptualization of knowledge by management and other scholars applies to the “knowledge” part of affective knowledge. We refer to knowledge as declarative and

procedural, i.e. the knowledge of what (facts) and the knowledge of how (know-how), respectively (Miron-Spektor *et al.*, 2011). This is in line with Kogut and Zander (1992), who distinguish between information and know-how (procedural knowledge), where they define information as “knowledge which can be transmitted without loss of integrity once the syntactical rules required for deciphering it are known” (p. 386). A slightly different approach is the knowledge-transfer view with roots in Anderson’s Adaptive Character of Thought (ACT) theory (Anderson, 1976, 1996a, 1996b; Nonaka, 1994), which postulates that procedural memory (knowledge about procedures) is an inferential process based on declarative memory (knowledge about facts). According to the ACT theory all knowledge is declarative initially, but learning occurs through transfer into procedural knowledge by generalizing, discriminating, or strengthening the application of declarative memory

The above division between procedural and declarative knowledge is one of many ways of defining knowledge (Grant, 1996), but it serves this paper well since procedural knowledge has a special role in conceptualizing affective knowledge. We argue that organizational procedural knowledge includes a higher degree of causal complexity than declarative knowledge (Szulanski, 1996; Zollo and Winter, 2002), since it is included in physical and social artifacts (Hargadon and Fanelli, 2002; Tyre and Orlikowski, 1994), embedded in practices and routines (Gherardi, 2009; Levitt and March, 1988; Miner and Haunschild, 1995), and tools (Miron-Spektor *et al.*, 2011), making it harder to know what one actually knows. This is supported by Becker *et al.* (2005), who see routines as a sensemaking process, where the repetition of routines is equalized with organizational practices (Winter, 1995). The consequence of this ambiguity is that managers and other strategy practitioners become uncertain about what practices, routines, and tools to follow when the external environment changes, or to take advantage of potentially new opportunities, and even concerning what works and what does not work for a stable strategic situation (Lippman and



Rumelt, 1982). This stickiness is related to the tacitness of practices (Kogut and Zander, 1992; Szulanski, 1996, 2000; Szulanski, Ringov, and Jensen, 2014; Winter and Nelson, 1982), and to collectively held knowledge within organizations (Kogut and Zander, 1992). The result is that affect becomes more important in guiding what we think we know for procedural compared to declarative knowledge, in order to reduce the felt uncertainty about knowledge (cf. Tsoukas, 1996), and especially since objective knowledge transfer methods could create a stronger stickiness rather than alleviate the problem of tacitness (Jensen, Szulanski, and Ringov, 2013).

### **A Framework of Affect-Induced Practices**

In this section, we connect the affective concepts explained above (affect as information, affect-induced cognition, and affective knowledge) to practice. We blend perspectives from literatures on affect, knowledge transfer, SAP in general, and strategy as discourse specifically. We aim to avoid reducing SAP to individual or group processes alone (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), by focusing on the continuous interaction between social and individual phenomena, where affect, cognitive processes, and affective knowledge are part of individual practices (Reckwitz, 2002), where practices in general enable or disable individual activities (Mantere, 2005). In our framework, practices are reinforced or amended over time as represented by moving repeatedly counterclockwise in Figure 1, which is dependent on the strategic context, current practices, and interpretations by strategy practitioners. We argue that affect makes its way upwards from the individual level to the organizational level through not only non-affective social interactions (Miron-Spektor *et al.*, 2011; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka and Peltokorpi, 2006; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), but equally by forms of affective sharing. Affective sharing is a form of discourse since it communicates meaning by expressing feelings in a mental, physical, and behavioral manner. Thus, we define affective sharing in a

similar fashion as Mantere and Vaara (2008) define discourse, than (as affective construction of social reality).

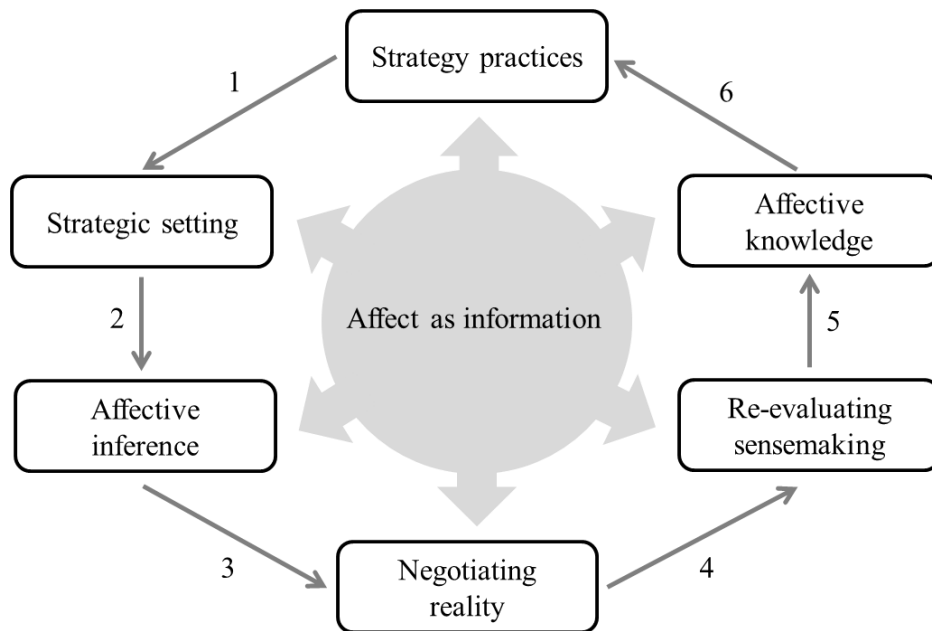


Figure 1. An Affect-Induced Framework of Strategy Practices.

The remaining of this section explains the concepts, elements, and dynamics of our framework illustrated in Figure 1. The numbers 1 to 6 represent mechanisms between the elements (boxes), which we explain below. The elements are not solely a consequence of the respective prior element, and the framework is not meant to include all the dynamics and feedback patterns among the elements. Our framework is not meant to be exhaustive, and we hope that future research directions will develop it further towards a theory of affect-induced strategizing and strategy practices.

Strategizing is about how strategy work is actually done through everyday activities (praxis) and practices (e.g., tools, norms, routines, and procedures) (Johnson, Melin, and Whittington, 2003; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 1996, 2006). In Figure 1, we illustrate how affect continuously interacts with the flow of strategizing, social interaction, and affective sharing to reproduce or amend strategy practices. By explicitly considering

affect, we adhere to the need for practice theorists to acknowledge not only social order but also cognitive structures and functions (Reckwitz, 2002). We argue this develops SAP further towards the aim of being based on human activity (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007; Whittington, 2006), and by connecting individual activities (part of praxis) with practices (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The concept of affect naturally takes departure at the individual-level of analysis, but through the mechanisms of social discursive interaction and affective sharing among practitioners, our framework connects to the interpersonal and organizational level. This is in line with the suggestion by Vaara and Whittington (2012) that SAP has potential to develop social practice. We do, however, not focus on team dynamics (see Liu and Maitlis, 2014, for such a perspective).

### *Strategy Practices*

Figure 1 depicts a circle where corporate ambassadors' and external stakeholders' strategy practices are continuously being shaped by one's affect and through social interaction (including affective sharing), and subsequently build on to develop these practices further. We initiate the circle with strategy practices, which are norms, routines and procedures related to the formation, change, and implementation of strategic actions. In other words, strategy practices are part of declarative and procedural knowledge related to strategic issues. Practices consist of apparent "facts" about routines, norms and procedures (for instance obtained during business and strategy courses), and experiences gained working on relevant tasks (procedural knowledge). Strategy practices are always laden with core affect (Duncan & Barrett, 2007), which is a basic and primitive psychological affective state constantly influencing our neurophysiological and somatovisceral internal milieu, reflecting how the environment (the context or a specific object) facilitates or blocks our aims (Barrett and Bliss-Moreau, 2009; Russell, 1983, 2003; Russell and Barrett, 1999). In this way affect indicates personal

significance and by that conveys information, which through misattribution (as explained in the section on affect as information) could be transformed to any degree of confidence or mistrust in the ability of one's strategic practices to alleviate strategic challenges. This has implications for whether the practitioner initiates a path towards amending strategy practices – if core affect is interpreted as not trusting the abilities of one's practices to meet the current strategic challenge, new routines and procedures are seen as necessary.

We suggest that strategy practices of individuals and the collective are in constant flux, since affect determines which part of the memory network that is activated at any point in time. Practices reside in memory throughout the brain, and these are laden with different affective cues (Anderson and Bower, 2014; Bower, 1981; Collins and Loftus, 1975). Memory nodes that are closely resembled by affect may activate each other (Kumfor *et al.*, 2013; LaBar and Cabeza, 2006; LeDoux, 1993; de Quervain, 2015; Whalley, 2015). This means that a practice may activate another practice due to affect alone. We therefore argue that strategy practices are online and temporal, and not a fixed property, since core affect constantly fluctuates. We term this as “active” strategy practices, by which we mean the fluid routines, norms and procedures that consciously or unconsciously influence strategic thinking, judgment, and decision making. By unconscious, we simply refer to cognitive processes outside our awareness (Vuilleumier *et al.*, 2011), which may be for most of our thinking (LeDoux, 2000a), especially since our capacity for attention is limited (Pourtois *et al.*, 2013). We believe that strong strategy practices – i.e., those that have seemingly been functioning well in the past – are less transient through time since they are more resistant towards changes in core affect. In this sense practitioners still have stable practices to rely on, but still with slight changes in their “edges” as affect moves, even within the day.

The ability of affect to activate or deactivate memory (and therefore practices) is likely to be a consequence of the fact that both memory and affect are associated with large

networks spanning the brain (Deco *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, affect influences the organization of memory (Brosch *et al.*, 2013; Phelps, 2006), affect embodies cognition (Duncan and Barrett, 2007; Kiverstein and Miller, 2015), affect impacts our perceptions in competition with schematic top-down processing (Barrett, 2011; Vuilleumier, 2005), and the function of brain areas is dynamic and will change over time (Kiverstein and Miller, 2015). The implication is that strategy practices continuously change (even within hours) not only due to information effects (affect as information), but also from the influence affect has on cognitive processing. If feeling positive, the practitioner has more confidence in the strategy practices active at the moment, even though elements of these practices are misattributed (this effect is explained in the affect-as-information section above), leading to increased top-down (heuristic) cognitive processing. If feeling negative, the practitioner questions the active practices to a greater extent (bottom-up cognitive processing). This means that if the active strategy practices are correctly matched with the current strategic challenge, then positive affect enhances decision making by not being occupied by irrelevant details (the converse holds for negative affect). On the other hand, if the active strategy practices are not the most suitable to alleviate the current strategic challenge compared to other practices available, then positive affect reinforces this misfit.

### *Strategic Setting and Affective Inference*

When the strategic setting of the company changes, for instance when new opportunities emerge or there is a competitive threat, strategy practices are retrieved from declarative and procedural memory (path number 1 in Figure 1) as stored representations of the past (Lindquist *et al.*, 2012b; Wilson-Mendenhall *et al.*, 2011), in order to alleviate the issue. Each time the strategic challenge is discussed, different representations of the practices will be activated due to the mediating influence of affect at the moment (i.e., active strategy

practices) (cf. Phelps *et al.*, 2014), and based on the degree of severity that the practitioner interprets into the strategic challenge. If feeling positive, the practitioner will judge the challenge as less severe (than when feeling negative), experience stronger confidence in the active strategy practices, as well as rely more on top-down cognitive processing and by that ignore certain details embedded in the application (praxis) and development of the active practices. This is why positive affect may lead to a “triple” amplification of the misfit that may exist between the active strategy practices and the current strategic challenge.

The more the strategy practitioner feels that the new strategic demands deviate from the capabilities of strategy practices and the experience with successful praxis guided by these practices, the stronger the affective reactions become to the current situation (path 2 in Figure 1) (Brosch *et al.*, 2013; Scherer, 2009). The reason for this is that affect is hardwired to create adaptive responses to changes in the environment, and to prioritize attention to those aspects that are likely to be most important to alleviate one’s concerns (Okon-Singer, Lichtenstein-Vidne, and Cohen, 2013). We call this affective interpretation of the fit between strategic demand and strategy practices, affective inference. If the strategy practitioner feels that this gap will be difficult to alleviate, the cognitive processing will be more detail oriented (bottom-up) (Bless *et al.*, 1990, 1996; Schwarz *et al.*, 1991). Additionally, this negativity will be reinforced by mood-congruent and state-dependent memory (Bower, 1981; Collins and Loftus, 1975; Gendolla, 2000; Niedenthal and Setterlund, 1994), where the practitioner more easily will recall other situations in the past where strategy practices and praxis were inadequate. The result may be that the strategy practitioner experiences a negative downward emotional cycle (cf. Fredrickson, 2001), where the strategic gap seems wider the more one contemplates possible actions (praxis), leading to an underestimation of current strategy practices and consequently ambivalent initiatives (praxis) by practitioners. This emotional downward cycle could occur even if the strategy practices are generally interpreted as solid

(but just not for the current strategic challenge), or in case these practices are affectively interpreted as weak compared to even anticipated challenges in the external or internal corporate environment. For positive affect, we may experience the opposite effects yielding a positive upward cycle legitimizing strategy practices.

### *Negotiating Reality*

So far in the affect-induced practice framework, we have explored affective influences on the individual level. We now move to the interpersonal level to explain the reproduction or amendment of strategy practices. We argue for two mechanisms underlying this aggregation: strategy discourse (Mantere and Vaara, 2008; Vaara, 2010); and affective sharing. The strategy practitioner is not functioning in a vacuum, but is part of a larger community to draw upon when needed. In this sense, strategy practices are not confined to one's own memories, knowledge or skills, but shared through strategy talk and discussions, as well as through the routines and norms (practices) within the organization to meet strategic challenges (Whittington, 2007). This means that affective inference (explained above) will be assessed by practitioners according to the overall confidence with colleagues' strategic abilities, as well as one's own abilities, and how these have materialized into strategy practices over time with associated track record in meeting strategic challenges. This confidence is constructed through discourse, meaning "linguistically mediated constructions of reality" (Mantere and Vaara, 2008: 341).

We argue that strategy practitioners negotiate the reality of the strategic gap through means such as discussions over lunch, emails, internal reports, powerpoint presentations and other socio-material practices (Hodgkinson *et al.*, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Whittington, 2006), until the individual-based affective inference initially drawn upon (path 3 in Figure 1) is transformed closer to a collective sense of reality (the latter expression is used

by Vaara, 2010). We believe this occurs when the physical, social and psychological discourses applied when negotiating the collective meaning of the strategic gap (Balogun *et al.*, 2014), triangulate towards a common understanding of the strategic setting. When the strategy discourse is aligning with the current strategy practices, these practices are legitimized and strengthened. If the strategy practices are not seen as sufficient in guiding the new initiatives to subvert the strategic gap, then these practices are questioned.

Social interaction through discourses (strategy talk and written documents) is not the only way in which social practices are reinforced or amended. We argue that affective sharing in various forms is equally important since affect by itself is a language, but without words. In a way, affect is condensing a great amount of prior experience and knowledge into a sense of understanding (or lack thereof), and provides information with clear effects on cognitive processing (Bless *et al.*, 1996). This information effect is shared among strategy practitioners through affect transfers (explained below), and creating subgroups of practitioners with collective affective tones (cf. Collins *et al.*, 2013). For instance, if the collective affective tone is positive, then strategy practitioners are more prone to use top-down (heuristic) processing (Bless *et al.*, 1990), and by that reinforce the social structure that is consistently activated by declarative or procedural memory during strategizing towards narrowing the strategic gap. If the collective affective tone is negative, relevant practices are questioned. In this case, strategy practices evolve if the strategic gap is perceived large enough to yield negative affective tones within subgroups responsible for strategy work, which is in line with practices as malleable over time (Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007; Orlikowski, 1996; Seidl, 2007).

Affect is a language in itself, and there are several ways in which it is communicated among practitioners. For instance, affect is shared through emotion recognition (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Bartel and Saavedra, 2000; Doherty, 1998; Hatfield *et al.*, 1994; Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson, 1992; Kelly and Barsade, 2001); affective contagion (Barsade, 2002;



Hatfield *et al.*, 1994; Visser *et al.*, 2013); vicarious affect (Bandura, 1986; Kelly and Barsade, 2001); behavioural entrainment and interactional synchrony (Condon and Ogston, 1967; Dabbs Jr, 1969; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1987); empathy (Zaki, 2014); audience-tuning (Echterhoff *et al.*, 2013); and affective induction and impression management (Kelly and Barsade, 2001; Taylor, Wayment, and Carrillo, 1996). We briefly explain these concepts in the following paragraph before moving on to the next phase in the framework (the re-evaluation of sensemaking).

Emotion recognition is “the process of analyzing expressive cues to infer another person’s emotional state” (Elfenbein, 2007: 355). Affective contagion is an automatic and unconscious tendency to mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, movements, and postures with those from another person with the result of converging emotionally (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Hatfield *et al.*, 1992). Vicarious affect is a social learning process where an individual is modelling another individual (Bandura, 1986; Kelly and Barsade, 2001). Behavioral entrainment and interaction synchrony refer to unconscious processes where an individual’s behavior modifies to synchronize with another individual (Condon and Ogston, 1967; Kelly and Barsade, 2001; Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1987). Examples of synchrony are mirroring of another’s movements (Dabbs, 1969), and sequential coordination of speech (Condon and Ogston, 1966). Empathy is the (automatic) and motivated process of understanding the affective state of another individual (Zaki, 2014). Audience-tuning is concerned with adjusting one’s communication to the audience, and by that creating a stronger sense of shared reality (Echterhoff *et al.*, 2013). Affective induction is the deliberate manipulation of another’s emotions and can be either interpersonal (face-to-face) or non-interpersonal, for instance by the use of movies, music, gifts, and rewards (Kelly and Barsade, 2001). Affective impression management is a process of displaying emotions in order to achieve goals or fit in. Such deliberate and conscious affective manipulations can be

quite powerful since individuals in general tend to compare themselves with others to evaluate the intensity, nature, and appropriateness of their own emotions (Bartel and Saavedra, 2000: 200). This idea originates from Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory and subsequent extensions by Schachter (Taylor *et al.*, 1996).

### *Re-Evaluating Sensemaking*

We now turn to the next element in the affect-induced framework as illustrated in Figure 1, which is about re-evaluating sensemaking. This is an individual-based activity where the strategy practitioner re-evaluates the seemingly ontological reality emerging from the most recent collective discussions and related written documents (path 4 in Figure 1). We argue that deep thinking is harder to conduct together with collective discourses due to the limiting ability of the brain to focus attention on several stimuli simultaneously (Pourtois *et al.*, 2013). This creates the need for the strategy practitioner to privately comprehend the likelihood that the strategic challenge will be met using the existing strategy practices in light of the collective understanding of potential actions, and the degree of material and conceptual affordances embedded in tools (cf. Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015). Organizations also design their own strategy tools based on standard ones, which means that the usefulness of these creative tools may be more or less uncertain than traditional frameworks. This becomes an additional source of information to what affect yields, as well as to what the tools themselves embed (Meyer *et al.*, 2013). The strategy practitioner will also take into account how well-practiced the organization has been in the past (Whittington, 2002), and the opinions by strategic champions enacted by their social roles (Mantere, 2005). All this information is condensed by affect – the emotional reaction of the strategy practitioner acts as a summary of whether the strategy practices should be reinforced or amended as a response to the strategic challenge.

Two main consequences of negotiating reality and re-evaluating sensemaking (path 5 in Figure 1) are (1) an overall judgment about the effectiveness of the strategy practices to address the strategic challenge, which is condensed into a primarily positive or negative affective state (i.e., an affective consequence of the judgment); and (2) assessment of the abilities of specific tools in relation to the current and similar strategic situations. The primarily positive or negative affect acts as a summary of the likelihood of solving or alleviating the strategic challenge, given the ease of which routines can be subverted or shifted within the organization in crisis or unfavorable situations (Reckwitz, 2002). If the practitioner's overall affect is positive from negotiating reality and re-evaluating sensemaking, this generates top-down and heuristic cognitive processing (Bless *et al.*, 1996), and stronger reliance on that part of the memory system related to the positive aspects of the current strategy practices (Bower, 1981; Collins and Loftus, 1975). In other words, positive affect legitimizes the current strategy practices, whereas negative affect questions these practices. Additionally, if the strategy practitioner implicitly asks oneself whether the overall judgment is satisfactory, positive affect will tend to yield the answer "Yes" (the mood-as-input model; Martin *et al.*, 1993, 1997; Martin and Stoner, 1996), and the assessment of the strategic gap will end earlier than when in negative affect, (this happens by relying on the condensed initial information portrayed by the overall combined affect that follows from negotiating reality and re-evaluating sensemaking). If the overall affect is negative, the strategy practitioner becomes more analytical and prolongs the assessment period by questioning the condensed information by affect.

Concerning point (2) above, affect does not only contain information about the strategic situation as benign or threatening, but also relative to those strategy tools that the practitioner focuses on to meet the strategic challenge (cf. Clore and Gasper, 2000). This means that the content of information that affect conveys is also specified by the particular

tools embedded within practices. For instance, the 7S framework by McKinsey and the opportunity-vulnerability matrix by Bain & Co will have differently perceived track records of being useful in closing strategic gaps within the organization (and correspondingly codified and documented in order for new and experienced strategy practitioners to be aware of this fact). In other words, the practitioner's perception of a strategy tool acts as a feedback and modifies the general information content of affect generated by the judgment of the phases of negotiation of reality and re-evaluated sensemaking. If the general affect is positive (negative), then the practitioner implicitly searches for strategy tools that potentially could explain why one is feeling positive (negative) facing the strategic challenge (misattribution, cf. Schwarz, 2012), which reinforces (questions) strategy practices related to this particular tool.

### *Affective Knowledge*

The condensed overall affect and related tool-specific information (path 5 in Figure 1) from the negotiation of reality and re-evaluation of sensemaking, may or may not materialize into affective knowledge. Above we defined affective knowledge as knowledge where the causal ambiguity of the situation is extensively reduced by affect. This does not necessarily imply that the causal confusion is reduced correctly. A certain degree of positive (negative) affect primes similar memory content by valence (Anderson and Bower, 2014; Bower, 1981), and conveys information that the strategic situation is mild (severe) (Schwarz, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 1988). Since the practitioner has the tendency to search for reasons for one's affect (Blaison *et al.*, 2012; Bohner *et al.*, 1988; Schwarz and Clore, 1983; Wyer and Carlston, 1979), positive (negative) affect increases (decreases) the confidence in strategy practices and tools, or/and decreases (increases) the sense of urgency of the strategic challenge. In either case, strategy practices are legitimized if the positive affect is strong enough, and questioned

when in sufficient negative affect.

When the organization faces a strategic challenge, strategy tools and techniques may not function as intended either because these do not identify the correct causal structure inherent in the problem (misrepresentation), or do not provide satisfactory remedies for the current strategic challenge (March, 2006). As a result, the possibility for solving or alleviating the strategic situation becomes ambiguous and uncertain. In such a case affect may step in and recalculate mental probabilities and make the tools, techniques, and other parts of strategy practices appear more certain – either more certain in alleviating the strategic challenge, or more certain that these practices are inadequate to face the current challenge. The affect-induced recalculated mental probabilities can either be higher or lower than the initial assessment immediately following negotiated reality and re-evaluated sensemaking. In both cases, uncertainty is reduced. Affective knowledge can either be better or worse compared to more “cold” knowledge with respect to the most suitable strategic move forward (which one often must assess in hindsight). Note that practices and knowledge are always laden with affect (Bower, 1981), but in the case of affective knowledge, we argue that affect is strong enough to significantly alter the perception of likelihoods (probabilities) in order to reduce uncertainty – for instance, the likelihood that a particular combination of strategy tools benefits the current strategic challenge, or that the challenge is less severe than what appeared initially. If affect does not reduce the uncertainty to the extent that affective knowledge is obtained in relation to the strategic challenge at the moment, this uncertainty remains part of the current strategy practices, and brought forward in the framework.

Due to misattribution (Blaison *et al.*, 2012; Schwarz and Clore, 1983) – i.e., the tendency to attribute one’s affect to the what one is currently thinking about – affect is associated with plausible reasons for one’s affect. This means that if the practitioner is focusing on a specific strategy tool or practice while being in a non-negligible positive affect,

this tool or practice may be legitimized as being able to meet the strategic challenge. On the other hand, if the practitioner is experiencing a non-negligible negative affect, the specific strategy tool or practice is seen as inadequate to address the current strategic situation. In this way, affect is not only able to convey general information, but also with regards to specific strategy tools and practices, it is able to inform their actual use. The criterion of “justified” – in justified true belief (i.e., how we choose to define knowledge) about practices and tools – is therefore determined by affect, and hence the concept affective knowledge. Memory (and therefore knowledge) is always affectively induced and retrieved (Kumfor *et al.*, 2013; LaBar and Cabeza, 2006; LeDoux, 1993; de Quervain, 2015; Whalley, 2015), but for affective knowledge, we argue that affect has a stronger role in deciding what the practitioner believes she or he knows about the appropriateness and functioning of strategy practices and associated strategy tools, as well as the interpretation of the severity of the strategic gap. The alternative to affective knowledge is knowledge that is less charged by affect that is able to reduce the perceived uncertainty for the current strategic situation. In other words, knowledge may be as affectively charged as affective knowledge, but with another mix of affect so that uncertainty is not extensively reduced as is the consequence (and defining feature) of affective knowledge. For instance, there is evidence that emotions can be ambiguous themselves (Fong, 2006), and moods may inherently be characterized as such since moods are diffuse with the tendency of being misattributed (Oatley and Johnson-Laird, 1987; Schwarz, 2012).

Those strategy tools and practices that are most often applied by management (historically) will also be those that most easily come to the practitioner’s mind, and therefore those that are more infused and associated either with positive or negative affect as accumulated over time (the result of the affect-induced cycle over time). This creates a reinforced legitimization (change) cycle for positive (negative) affect with regards to strategy practices and embedded tools. This means that these practices and tools themselves activate

either positive or negative affect, which then acts as a feedback by legitimizing and questioning, respectively, strategy practices. Memory (and hence knowledge) is infused with affect through various stages in information processing and stored in long-term memory (LaBar and Cabeza, 2006), potentially making the affect-induced cycle (circle) inherently legitimizing (changing) specific strategy practices and embedded tools. This may further lead to the sub-optimal use of practices and tools for new strategic challenges, or an organization that continuously questions certain practices and tools.

Knowledge is socially situated (Brown *et al.*, 1989). Strategic knowledge (including strategy practices) fluctuates over time within the organization, even within hours, since collective discussions, meetings, reports, and personal feedback from tool-use activate new convictions, possibilities, and ideas. In this way, the strategy practices are continuously being moulded and shaped. The various forms of strategic knowledge over time among internal strategy practitioners, and through external stakeholders, have shaped the current strategy practices, and these practices stabilize the current strategic knowledge. In other words, structuration dynamics apply (Giddens, 1984; Whittington, 2010; Zhu, 2006). When a strategy practitioner experiences affective knowledge compared to more “cold” knowledge as a consequence of the phases negotiated reality and re-evaluated sensemaking, the strategy practitioner becomes more certain for either the need to amend or reinforce strategy practices (path 6 in Figure 1). Whether affective knowledge reinforces or amends the organizational routines and norms, depends on the strength and clarity of affect, as well as how uncertain the strategic situation initially appears to be. At this point, we have come to a full circle in our framework of affect-induced strategy practices. Moving the whole circle may happen several times a day for a strategy practitioner, for instance when the day consists of meetings and individual activities interchangeably. In order for a strategy practitioner to be able to actually reinforce or amend strategy practices, one needs to negotiate the new suggested reality with

other strategy practitioners. This is a process over time as various strategy practitioners move counterclockwise in our framework, constantly assessing practices while still being strongly socialized and controlled by these routines and norms, with affect as an important source for information about whether legitimization or change of strategy practices is the best action.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Our framework explains how affect influences the legitimization or change of strategy practices at the individual level. The core functioning of affect within this framework is through the information it conveys. Positive affect enhances the confidence in strategy practices, embedded strategy tools, and colleagues' strategic capabilities, as well as reducing the apparent severity of current strategic challenges. Negative affect has opposite effects. Because of this, positive affect has the ability to build more positivity since all aspects of the strategic situation are viewed as positive at the same time – both the remedies and obstacles. Similarly, negative affect builds more negativity. In this way, the affect-induced framework may become self-reinforcing; positive affect legitimizes strategy practices since the practitioner does not see any reason not to, and through more associated heuristic cognitive processing, the ability to break this cycle is diminished. Negative affect has the opposite effects.

This reinforced nature of the framework may be reduced due to negotiation of reality and subsequent re-evaluation of sensemaking. In the former, strategy discourses and affective sharing are main mechanisms to shed new views on the affective inference – the interpreted degree of fit between strategy practices and the strategic challenge. Affective inference is fluid and “online”, and changes from day to day due to the fluctuating property of the basic and primitive core affect. One can therefore only consider strategy practices as transient social constructions, as for all other affective interpretations, for instance of the strategic challenge.



Despite this transient nature of affective interpretations, strategy discourse could create a more realistic and true situational sense of the reality, and by that influence affect to align with this collective process. This is especially true when strategy discourses and affective sharing are mutually supportive (in agreement). Conversely, affect may primarily reflect past memories of the positive aspects of strategy practices rather than focusing on the misfit with the current strategic challenge, since positive memory nodes activate other positive memories, and due to heuristic (top-down) cognitive processing. Since affect is a language by itself with the use of feelings rather than words, it has a special ability in condensing information, much like a picture is worth thousand words. This means that bottom-up (analytic) cognitive processing does not necessarily work that well on affect since it is difficult to dissect affect in smaller analytical pieces for assessment during negotiation of reality. In other words, discourse through affect is likely to supersede strategy discourse through words and written documents.

Our affect-induced framework could be used to shed light on why some strategy practices and tools are ultimately being relied on, by highlighting the role that affect has upon their use. For instance, some strategy tools are most likely used due to the path dependence that affect may reinforce since tools by themselves activate affect through affect-congruent memory, which then initiates top-down processing that does not focus on details that would question the use of these tools within a particular context. Through strategy discourses and affective sharing, this path dependence may also be reinforced at the collective level.

More generally, our paper implies that affect should have a prominent role among SAP researchers. Affect functions both at the individual, interpersonal and group level, and materializes within routines and norms (practices) over time. Affect has powerful abilities in conveying information in a convincing manner since it often reinforces itself through misattribution, condenses a large amount of external information into a feeling state that is not

easily dissected and analyzed, and influences cognitive processing. Modern neuroscientific methods have revealed that affect is a form of cognition, and so-called rational thinking is fully reliant on healthy functioning of affect. It is therefore time for SAP researchers to further humanize the strategy field by acknowledging the prevalent properties of affect in forming strategy practices, and how affect influences praxis and others aspects of the daily functions of strategy work.

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